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THE NEW REPUBLIC

THE CONSERVATIVE MENTAL BREAKDOWN

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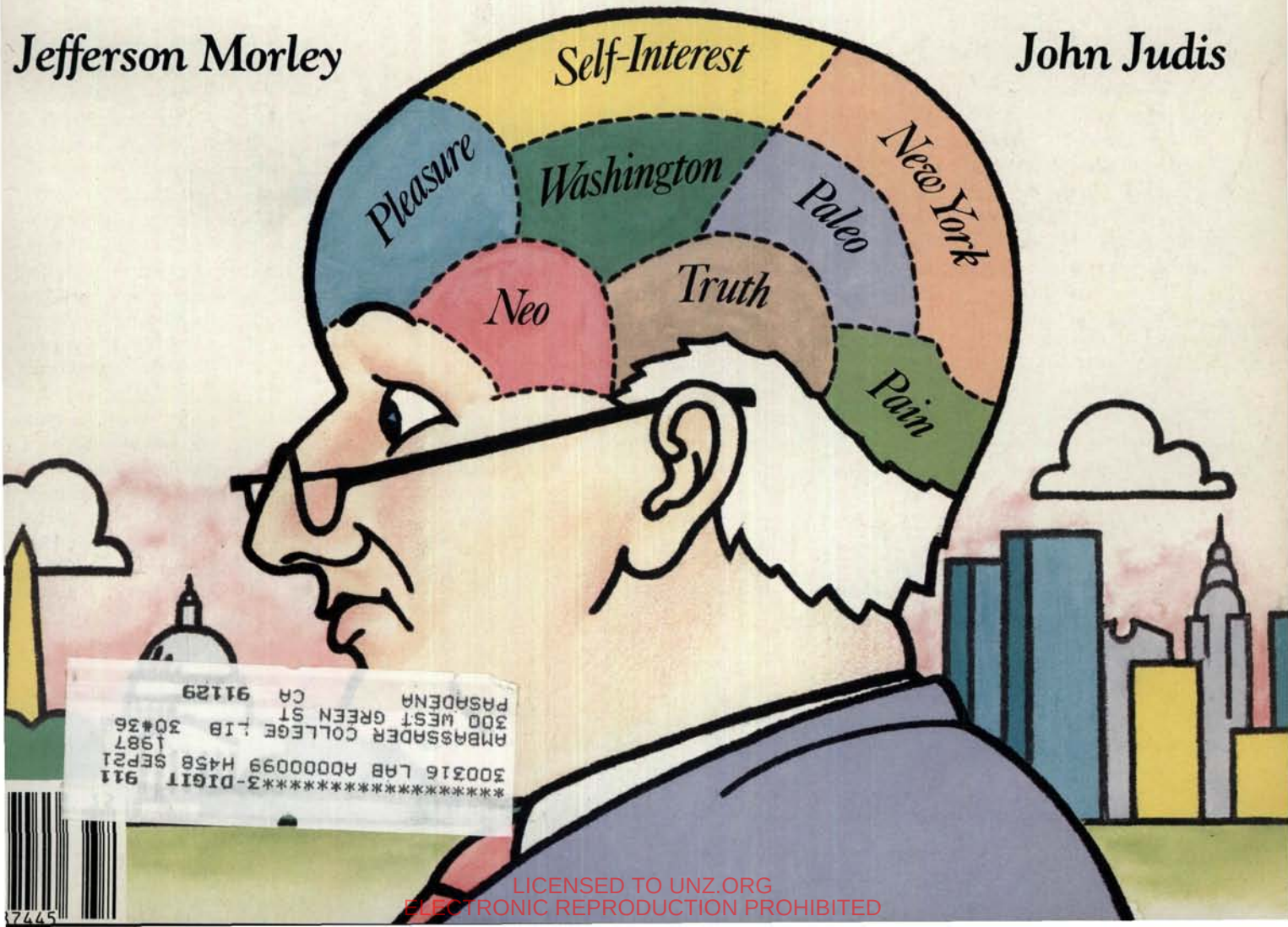

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CORRESPONDENCE

KITSCH CRITICISM

To the editors:

I rise to defend Vincent Canby from Raymond Carney's curiously intense malevolence ("A Critic in the Dark," June 30) not as a fellow reviewer of the "bourgeois" stripe, but as a grateful reader of his work. Agreeability of manner is no small virtue in a writer whose duty it is to appear three or four times a week before an essentially unchanging audience in a publication that dominates its market as the *New York Times* does. After 16 years on the job, Vincent Canby has yet to wear out his welcome at my breakfast table. One hour with the surly and graceless Carney, on the other hand, is enough for a lifetime.

Canby's job is not to provide the last word on a film, but the first word. In this work Canby has been encouraging to a wide range of movies, by Carney's own backhanded admission, including a number of films Carney also admires. (Canby's sin is that he did not like them for the reasons Carney deems correct, or that his language was not quite of the quality this divine stylist appreciates.) But is it not better for the reviewer for a paper of the *Times*'s influence to be a person of eclectic tastes, rather than one with a dogmatic turn of mind? Would it really improve the level of discourse if John Simon—or Raymond Carney—replaced Canby?

I doubt it. Movie reviewing, particularly for general-audience journals, is not a happy occupation for people of reflexively anti-bourgeois temperament. This is because—yes—movies are mostly made by and for members of the middle class, who compose, for better or for worse, the only audience sufficiently large, and sufficiently interested, to support this most expensive of expressive forms. For that matter, they compose the only viable audience for all the other arts. You had better be able to talk to them—there is virtually no one else out there anymore.

To the degree that Canby and the rest of us bourgeois reviewers have tried to politely introduce our classmates to works not of the Hollywood mainstream I think we have honorably discharged our obligations to our own standards and to the art of film. If there is even a small audience in this country for the likes of Bergman, Truffaut, Fellini, and, indeed, Cassavetes (for whom Carney serves as lead groupie), it is precisely because some of the "genre" critics (a word that means nothing as Carney employs it) have engaged seriously with their work and encouraged their readers to do the same.

Reading the extraordinarily varied list of movies that Carney condemns Canby for praising, one can come to the conclusion that Canby is more alive than his critic is to the possibilities inherent in many manners of filmmaking, including, naturally, those that arrive under crassly commercial auspices—the vast majority of movies that get into general release, after all. Indeed, Carney gives his game away when he makes "two general categories of film" called "escapist / fantasy / camp / farce / or genre picture" and "realist / humanist / socially relevant / personal / or domestic drama" and then chides Canby for having a taste narrowly confined to these categories. But any grouping that requires that many slashes just to define is not a grouping at all, and these two encompass about 95 percent of all the movies ever made, including just about all the "authentic masterpieces of the last 15 years" named by Carney when he gets around to mentioning his own singular—not to say weird—preferences.

I submit that a reviewer who didn't respond favorably to at least some films that fall into the "categories" Canby is condemned for endorsing should probably get out of the business—and possibly take up monastic orders. I also submit that anyone who thinks *Wanda* is a masterpiece is in no position to call to account a reviewer for kind of liking *Alligator*. To borrow what he says is one of Canby's favorite rhetorical devices, a pair of negative understatements, I would say Raymond Carney is not quite as funny as Siegfried Kracauer, but not quite as relevant to today's issues in film criticism as Hugo Münsterberg. Since Carney claims to have trouble ferreting out the meaning in statements of that kind, I'll explain it for him: I think he's a prissy nitwit.

RICHARD SCHICKEL
Time
New York, New York

ALIEN ACCUSATION

To the editors:

Evan Barr's essay "Borderline Hypocrisy" (July 14 & 21) was a one-sided account of the participation of Hispanics in the debate over immigration reform.

But when Mr. Barr made reference to the 1980 redistricting in New York State, saying that by arguing for adjusted census figures, I was able to save my district by taking into account the alleged thousands of undocumented persons living in the Bronx, he is not only one-sided—he is inaccurate in his assessment of what occurred. The 18th Congressional District was created as a largely minority district in order to meet the requirements outlined in section two of the Voting Rights Act.

I have been fortunate enough to represent the people of the 18th District since 1982. Prior to that, I represented much of the same constituency in the 21st Congressional District. During my tenure in Congress, my district has been at all times at least 50 percent Hispanic. Yet most of those individuals are like me, of Puerto Rican ancestry, and Puerto Ricans have been citizens since 1917.

There has, therefore, never been the slightest consideration on my part to preserve my congressional seat by counting undocumented persons in the Bronx. The reasons for this are simple. Accounting for undocumented persons is extremely difficult. And no estimates, no matter how vague or purportedly specific, indicate that there is a large undocumented population in the Bronx.

Finally, Mr. Barr attributes to me a statement in which I expressed my concern over the undercount of undocumented persons in my district. As chairman of the Census and Population Subcommittee before the Decennial Census and as the subcommittee's present chairman, I am, of course, concerned about an accurate census. That concern, however, extends beyond my district to every congressional district across the country and to every person documented or undocumented, black, Hispanic, Asian, or Anglo. If federal programs are to be properly run, if every district and locality is to receive its fair share of government funding, then we must have an accurate census. It's through the use of census figures that we determine such funding.

ROBERT GARCIA
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

Correction: Due to a copy-editing error in our July 28 issue, a letter from Robert A. Riesman stated incorrectly that "Ron Wyden is . . . criticizing [Robert] Packwood for supporting foreign aid." Congressman Wyden has taken no such position.

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Listen To Your Genes

Over the next few years, scientists will be developing the ability to test your blood for genetic predisposition to many diseases. With increasing precision, they will be able to predict your chance of getting cancer, dying of a heart attack, coming down with Alzheimer's, or succumbing to schizophrenia. Although this will be a boon in many ways, it is also raising some civil libertarian concerns. The fear is that employers and insurers will use genetic testing to discriminate against people who flunk the test. In the ultimate nightmare scenario, companies will require the test of all potential employees, and then avoid hiring someone who seems to have a higher than average risk of going crazy, getting sick, or dying in mid-career.

It is a sound human instinct that finds it just too galling for your fate in life to be determined by some test over which you have no control. But what exactly is the concern here? Is it that the tests might be wrong? Or that they might be right? Is it (1) that you might not actually get cancer despite a genetic predisposition; or (2) that a genetic predisposition shouldn't be held against you, whether it leads to cancer or not?

An article in the *Economist* (June 21) notes that genetic tests are fallible: "there is no guarantee that the tests will either catch all those who are vulnerable or avoid all those who are invulnerable." But an editorial (July 17) worries that they are *not* fallible: genetic testing is "marvelous, so long as people are not denied jobs and insurance just because of their genes." Clearly, that is the greater cause for alarm. To avoid this kind of abuse, the company that has taken the lead in genetic testing (Focus Technologies, based here in Washington) has promised to concentrate on diseases that can be prevented if a predisposition is discovered.

This apparently comfortable consensus that people's life chances shouldn't be affected by genetic tests is intriguing, since Western nations have been using genetic tests to assign places in the social hierarchy for generations. These tests are called IQ tests or aptitude tests or College Boards, and they already play a far larger role than the nightmare scenario imagines for newer forms of genetic testing. In a larger sense, people have been "denied jobs . . . just because of their genes" since civilization began.

Of course the debate is endless about whether there actually is a single variable called "intelligence," and whether it is actually inherited through genes. What seems beyond dispute is that, whether it's nature or nurture, a person's success in life depends in important ways on factors beyond that person's control, be they genes or prenatal nutrition or a happy childhood or whatever. This obvious truth is often obscured by the use of the term "merit" to describe what society is testing for and rewarding. Even if we could eliminate race, sex, and class barriers to success, there would still be "merit." In fact, as Harvard psychology professor Richard Herrnstein pointed out in a notorious *Atlantic* article 15 years ago, the closer we come to achieving a truly meritocratic society, the bigger the role innate factors will play.

Intelligence and aptitude tests have been controversial since they started, just as the new genetic tests are controversial today. But the controversy has been of the first sort (what if they're wrong?), not of the second (what if they're right?). Critics charge that, far from testing innate ability, these tests are a self-fulfilling prophecy that ratify current social inequalities. What about the larger question, though? If it is patently unfair to penalize someone for an inherent predisposition to cancer, why isn't it just as unfair to penalize someone for an inherent predisposition to slow-wittedness?

Herrnstein succinctly summarized the case for rewarding intelligence: "if virtually anyone is smart enough to be a ditch digger, and only half the people are smart enough to be engineers, then society is, in effect, husbanding its intellectual resources by holding engineers in

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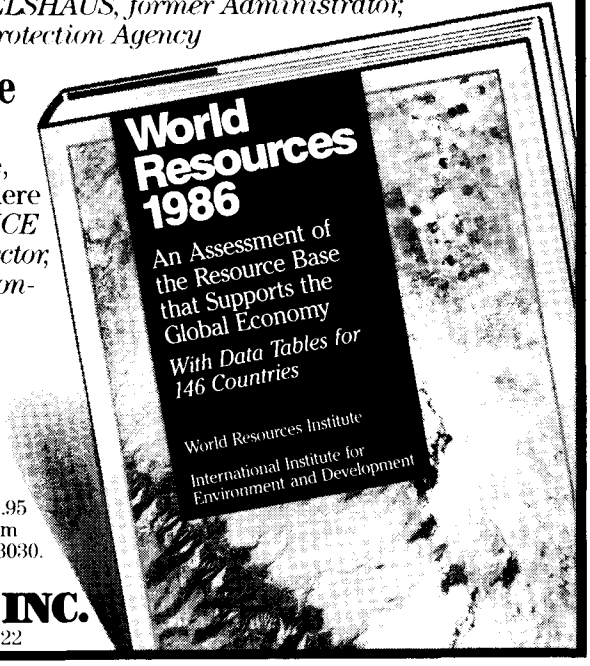
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THE NEW REPUBLIC
AUGUST 11 & 18, 1986

STUFFING FARMERS, STIFFING PEASANTS

When President Reagan signed the Farm Security Act of 1985 last December, neither Congress nor the administration was terribly happy with the costly new grab bag of handouts and regulations they had created. But pols from both parties played along, hoping that even if the bill didn't end the farm crisis, it might at least keep agricultural interests placated until the 1986 elections. Only half a year later, even that modest goal is in doubt, and the worst fears of the bill's critics are being confirmed—or exceeded. Farm subsidies that were originally projected to cost $54 billion over the next three years appear to be headed over $30 billion for this year alone. The bulk of these huge payments are going to wealthy farmers who don't need federal help. And farm-state legislators, claiming their constituents still aren't much better off than they were before the bill passed, are looking around for ways to get them more money from Washington.

The reason for American agriculture's problems is simple: American farmers produce more food and fiber than they could profitably sell on a free market. In cold economic terms, that means that we have more farmers than we need. And with former food-importing countries all over the world (except the Soviet Union) now hauling in record harvests, there are more American farmers than the world needs, too.

The Farm Security Act tried to buck these trends by cutting the so-called "loan rate"—the price at which the federal government promised to buy up crops farmers couldn't sell to anyone else. The loan rate sets an effective floor under the price of U.S.-produced grain. Cutting it was supposed to make American farm goods cheaper abroad, helping farmers recapture the export markets they have been losing steadily for the last five years. In principle, this is logical enough. For one thing, it's an improvement over the insane system under which non-farmers paid twice to help bail out farmers—once as taxpayers, and again as consumers in the form of higher food prices.

But the farm bill also creates a new form of insanity. In a truly free market, the short-run consequences of cutting farm prices and letting farmers compete to capture markets would be lower farm income, declining land values, and more farm failures. The Farm Security Act, however, tries to prop up farm income through lavish "deficiency" payments. The result has been an unprecedented transfer of cash (the Agriculture Department's original guess was $13 billion, but it will almost certainly be more than that) from taxpayers to farmers, many of them wealthy.

Here's how it works. Deficiency payments are based on the difference between the loan rate and a "target" price also set by the government. The payments were bound to go up this year since the farm bill froze target prices and cut loan rates. For corn, for example, deficiency payments have increased from 61 cents per bushel to $1.11 per bushel. You have to take a certain amount of land out of production to qualify for the deficiency program, but the payments are so huge they create an irresistible incentive for farmers to produce more on the acreage they do plant. The more you grow, the more you get. Thus deficiency payments both perversely encourage overproduction and reward the biggest, richest producers. In 1985 two-thirds of all deficiency payments went to farmers who were wealthier than the average taxpayer.

The payout will probably be even more skewed this year, as big farmers take advantage of loopholes in the deficiency program. Like all welfare programs, this one sets a maximum payment, only here it's $50,000 per farmer. But even this absurdly generous "limit" isn't really a limit at all. After they've hit the $50,000 maximum, farmers are allowed to keep collecting a smaller, yet still substantial, deficiency payment on every remaining bushel they harvest. Meanwhile, many farmers, especially big cotton and rice producers, are dividing their farms up into smaller units, so they can claim the $50,000 maximum payment for each parcel. This year many wheat and feed grain producers will be collecting over $150,000 each, and some cotton and rice growers will get over $1 million each. Under yet another provision of the law, the Agriculture Department has paid out $4 billion in "advance" deficiency payments—money that normally wouldn't have been due until late next year.

Meanwhile, cutting the loan rate has turned out to be futile anyway. The new lower prices may have kept farm exports slightly above what they otherwise would have been, but they haven't even come close to stopping the

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steady slide in American sales abroad. In fact, May was the first time since 1971 that the United States registered a monthly trade deficit in food. For the year, the Agriculture Department estimates that exports will *drop* over $3 billion. Once again, the government finds itself buying up record quantities of surplus grain. In part, farm exports are lagging for the same reason that all U.S. exports are: a sluggish world economy. But mainly our price-cutting efforts are simply being swamped by the new realities in the world market for food. America can no longer expect to feed the world, now that Third World countries such as India have grain surpluses of their own. Nor can we expect countries like Argentina and Brazil, which have recently won sizable shares of the world grain market and which need farm export earnings to pay their foreign debts, to surrender now that we're trying to come back on the scene. They are cutting prices and holding on to their markets.

WHAT FEW GAINS American farmers make under the bill they often win by bullying Third World countries. The free market is supposedly America's solution for the developing world's economic woes. But when it comes to agriculture—the starting place for any developing country—we practice gross government intervention, rigging the market to our own advantage. Uruguay, with a foreign debt of almost $5 billion, finds that the United States is selling beef to Brazil at 30 cents a pound—half of what Uruguay can charge. The United States does this because the government has millions of pounds of excess beef on its hands. And why is that? Because we paid dairy farmers to slaughter their cattle under a $1.8 billion plan to prop up U.S. milk prices. The farm bill also reduces sugar import quotas in order to boost the prices, and profits, domestic sugar producers receive—a big blow both to U.S. consumers and to indebted Caribbean countries such as the Dominican Republic and Jamaica.

Perhaps the biggest victim is Thailand, an ally that is heavily dependent on rice exports to earn foreign exchange. In the horse trading before the 1985 bill's final passage, rice-state legislators arranged a new "marketing loan" deal. This "loan" is really a grant of eight dollars for every hundred pounds of rice a farmer produces. The farmers pocket the difference between the amount of the "loan" and whatever they get by selling their crop at the current world market price. That price is well below what our farmers would sell at without this subsidy, which will cost over $800 million this year. The average Thai rice farmer, by contrast, makes $800 per year. In short, we are subsidizing our farmers so they can take away markets from poor farmers in a poor country by selling at below their costs of production. The word for this is "dumping"—which we're happy to use when accusing the Japanese and the Europeans of practicing it.

With November's elections on the way, the failure of the Farm Security Act to promote exports has sent legislators from the farm states scurrying in search of new ways to buy off their constituents. Senate majority leader Robert Dole of Kansas, worried about all the Midwestern Republican senators up for re-election, reportedly favors even bigger export subsidies, including subsidized sales to the Soviet Union. There's talk of offering wheat and feed grain farmers the same marketing loan handout rice farmers now enjoy. Another proposed scheme would require a sharp overall cut in production so that farmers could sell at a higher price on the domestic market.

But these gimmicks would be even more expensive and just as futile as the ones we've already tried. It's time we faced up to the fact that America is no longer the world's cheapest source for all agricultural products any more than it is for steel and cars. Even if we have to get used to importing some food in the future, that wouldn't necessarily be any more of a threat to our national security than importing cars is. We would always have enough land available for production to preserve our self-sufficiency in a crisis. Just like any other form of protectionism, farm subsidies divert scarce resources from more productive use and allow the industry to postpone painful but necessary adjustments. No one is suggesting that we take every hard-pressed farmer off the government dole tomorrow (though the poorest ones are precisely those who benefit least from the current subsidy programs). But it's ludicrous to keep high-cost domestic farm producers in business no matter what the price may be to ourselves and to other countries. Phasing out subsidies would help Third World countries work their way out of poverty—and ensure that those American farmers who remain really can compete in world markets .

NOTEBOOK

□ TABLE TALK: Hanna Siniora is the highly intelligent editor of *Al-Fajr*, Jerusalem's ardently pro-PLO newspaper. The Israelis would be delighted to have him represent the Palestinians at the peace table. In the meantime, people who can't (or won't) meet with Yasir Arafat make the trek to Siniora's favorite table at the American Colony Hotel to try to divine whether there's been any change in the Fatah line. Usually they come away disappointed—not that Siniora isn't accurate (and loyal) but that he's had so little to say beyond the usual and obsolete maximalist boilerplate. The sudden visit of Israel's Prime Minister Shimon Peres to Morocco's King Hassan, who is also chairman of both the Arab League and the Islamic Council (no small matters, these), is not the kind of confab contrived to cheer Palestinian revolutionaries. So it's one thing when Mayor Elias Freij of Bethlehem welcomes the meeting as a "courageous step"; to the Palestinian gunslingers he has been a Zionist patsy all along. But now Siniora himself has been quoted as saying, "From a historical point of view the trip can be compared to Sadat's first trip to Jerusalem." Perhaps we may take this to be Mr. Siniora's belated approval of Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1977. In any event, another editor at *Al-Fajr*, Daouad Kuttab, has said that the present visit "completes the circle of the conspiracies of Arab governments against the Palestinian people." If this is evidence of

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further disarray among the Palestinians, the occasion may provide an opportunity for other warring Arabs to reunite. President Assad of Syria has broken relations with Morocco, which is exactly what Yasir Arafat would like to do. Speaking for the PLO, an aide to Arafat promised to "fight with all our means" anything that comes out of the meeting, which may be the last word.

□ BLAME AMERICA FIRST: Apologists for the Sandinista dictatorship are now saying that *La Prensa*, which was already serving as the brave tribune of Nicaraguan democrats during the Somocista era, was shut down this past June because of U.S. aid to the *contras*. These friends of the *comandantes* have impoverished imaginations: they just won't understand that the design for revolution leaves no room for freedom of the press. (What does it take after all the bitter experience with Marxism-Leninism?) They also have poor memories. Sandinismo has been threatening to throttle *La Prensa* for years. When Ronald Radosh returned from Nicaragua in 1983, he reported in TNR ("Darkening Nicaragua," October 24, 1983) that the editor of the official Sandinista newspaper, *Barricada*, was already then calling for boarding up *La Prensa*. There is "no essential need to learn the other point of view. [*La Prensa*] serves no purpose in the revolutionary process." So now, after years under an ever more arbitrary censorship, the purposeless life of a free paper has been ended. "Without a Free Press," *La Prensa* used to emblazon on its front page, "there is no freedom." And now, indeed, there isn't. Another revolutionary purpose of Sandinismo fulfilled.

□ MEANWHILE, IN GUATEMALA: Allan Nairn and Jean-Marie Simon's article on the Guatemalan security forces, "Bureaucracy of Death" (TNR, June 30), is a national sensation in Guatemala. In the article, Nairn and Simon explained how the military's intelligence apparatus, the so-called G-2, coordinates and carries out the assassination of unarmed civilians, including leading democratic politicians. The country's intimidated press skirted the substance of the story. (Forty-seven journalists have been killed in Guatemala in the last eight years, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.) None even dared to print the names of the current high-ranking officers and the crimes in which they have been implicated. The army's first public response was to falsely accuse Nairn and Simon of working with the country's guerrilla movement, a charge that in Guatemala is tantamount to a death threat. When a TV news anchorman began to mention the names of the officers implicated in political killings, the screen mysteriously went blank for more than a minute. But as the press began devoting more and more space to the story, the army was forced to acknowledge, for the first time ever, the existence of the G-2. The army chief of staff, Hector Alejandro Gramajo, said that the G-2 "investigates and controls opponents of the state . . . anyone who has a record as an opponent of the Guatemalan state in any realm." This is candid, if inadvertent, confirmation of Nairn and Simon's article, and a concise description of the repressive machinery that has killed so many Guatemalan democrats.

□ SOUTH AFRICA SET-ASIDE: Though he was clearly President Reagan's first choice, North Carolina businessman Robert J. Brown's nomination to be America's next ambassador to South Africa is off, due to embarrassing revelations about his past business activities. Nevertheless, the fact that Brown was considered at all revealed much about Reagan administration hypocrisy on affirmative action. For one thing, it showed that the president thinks it's fine to skip over qualified white candidates in order to give a black of dubious qualifications a top government job, especially if the token selection serves to deflect criticism of his administration's policy. For another, the flirtation with Brown underscored the administration's long-standing toleration of minority set-aside programs. It was the second time the White House selected a black who had once served as a front man for white businessmen who wanted to horn in on contracts that the government had set aside for minority-owned firms (Clarence Pendleton's appointment as chairman of the Civil Rights Commission was the first). One of the charges that sank Brown was that, in 1973, the Small Business Administration awarded him an $866,651 contract to provide food and janitorial services at a Marine base in California—even though a white man really ran the company. Set-aside programs for minority businessmen are rife with such problems, largely because in most states there aren't nearly enough legitimate minority-run contractors to meet the government's quota. But even when they function honestly, the moral justification for set-asides is doubtful. Why should anyone who has enough money to own his own company be considered "disadvantaged"? If only blacks who really are poor could stir the Republicans' generous impulses the way characters like Brown do. Maybe if they tried wearing three-piece suits . . .

The Democrat who could.

RUN, BILL, RUN

A FEW WEEKS BACK, *Newsweek* reported that Senator Bill Bradley of New Jersey was taking tentative first steps toward running for the 1988 Democratic presidential nomination. He's raising money, getting ready to campaign for Democratic candidates this fall, and generally making a bigger name for himself nationally. Asked about this report, Bradley responded, "I found it humorous." No, he insisted, he's not running for president.

For once, a politician denying that he's plotting to gain the presidency seemed to be telling the truth. Or at least that's the best I could determine from talking to Bradley and to countless Democrats who'd like to see him run. There's dreadful irony in this for the Democratic Party.

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After losing four of the last five presidential elections, three by landslides, the party is brimming with eager presidential candidates. Trouble is, they're all likely losers, given the built-in Republican advantage in presidential elections. And the one Democrat who has a solid chance of winning and thus ought to be running isn't.

Why are Bradley's prospects so much better? He's done what practically every other prominent Democrat pays lip service to. Since 1980 the conventional wisdom among Democratic leaders has been that its national candidates must generate "new ideas," champion the broad national interest instead of a few special interests, and pursue an assertive, more internationalist foreign policy. When it comes to specifics, to taking a position on real issues, to making "tough choices," most Democrats shrink from the task. Bradley doesn't.

He has broken out of the mold. One rap on liberal Democrats has been that they're so preoccupied with looking after minorities and the poor that they neglect everyone else. They'd rather redistribute existing wealth to the less affluent than seek to create more for everybody. Bradley says you can go after both goals at the same time—economic growth and equity. That's the key to the success of his approach to tax reform—it helps all individuals, rich, poor, in-between. To achieve this, Bradley has been willing to make trade-offs that other Democrats find too unattractive.

To get rid of preferential treatment of capital gains in the Senate tax bill, he pushed for holding down the top rate on personal income to a level where an even lower rate for capital gains becomes harder to defend. This meant the nominal rate of taxation for the well-off is far lower than before, which upset some Democrats but is fine with Bradley, since the elimination of the capital gains preference and other loopholes, along with taking the working poor off the rolls completely, will leave the tax code more progressive. At the same time, thanks to lower rates, he's not seen as the enemy by those who pay a large share of the taxes in the country. This is significant. It was Walter Mondale's biggest problem in 1984.

On national security matters, many Democrats have come to be seen as wimps because they reflexively oppose the use of force. Instead, they invariably call for negotiations, now, tomorrow, and forever. This reputation has been abetted by their tendency to vote against any weapons system that might be deployed in the foreseeable future. It all but precludes winning the White House. Bradley doesn't have this image problem. He has slipped free of it by backing *contra* aid and Star Wars. True, neither of these programs is terribly popular. But what the American people do like are national leaders who take decisive action in defense of the nation and its international interests. The whole (strong leadership) becomes more than the sum of the parts (specific policies). That's the crux of Reagan's popularity.

THE APPEALING THING about Bradley is that he's been able to stake out his own turf without jettisoning liberal ideals. On most issues—abortion, the environment, women's rights, civil rights, social programs, judicial action, and so forth—he's predictably liberal. But he's reached back to an earlier generation, embracing the liberalism of John F. Kennedy (a tax cutter and tax reformer, remember, and a semi-hawk), not the liberalism of George McGovern. Amazingly, he's done this without stirring the enmity of any constituency group of the Democratic Party. And no one calls him a tool of any Democratic special interest.

Virtually every other Democrat mentioned as a presidential possibility has either angered some party constituency or is beholden to one or more of them. Either way, it's sure to lead to trouble in 1988. Among the more moderate sorts, Governor Bruce Babbitt of Arizona and former governor Charles Robb of Virginia are unpopular with organized labor. Chrysler president Lee Iacocca, who constitutes a special interest all by himself, is hardly a labor favorite. And if Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia decides to run after all, his support for a constitutional amendment repealing the *Roe v. Wade* abortion decision would arouse the ire of feminists.

On the beholden side, Representative Richard Gephardt of Missouri has clumsily catered to feminists by abandoning his long-time support for the anti-abortion amendment that Nunn still backs, and to labor by downplaying tax reform and ballyhooing protectionism. Senator Gary Hart of Colorado has been buttering up every liberal group in sight, particularly labor leaders such as AFL-CIO chief Lane Kirkland, who opposed him in 1984. Senator Joseph Biden of Delaware talks airily about bucking special interests, then doesn't follow through. Governor Mario Cuomo of New York isn't identified with any particular interest group. But like Jesse Jackson, he remains a politician in the redistributionist mode.

BRADLEY IS A liberal who can win. The breadth of his appeal is probably wider than that of any politician in the country, including President Reagan. True, Bradley lacks Reagan's charm and skill in communicating political ideas to a mass audience. Yet in 1984 Reagan took 60 percent of the vote in New Jersey, Bradley 64 percent. To put it another way, all the Mondale voters and nearly half the Reagan voters supported Bradley. Not bad for a liberal running in a conservative era. Now Bradley's reached the point where almost no one criticizes him. That wouldn't last if he ran for president, but it's a nice starting point.

And there's another important part of his political persona: the aura of integrity. To an unusual extent, Bradley has not compromised—or sold out, to be crude about it—for financial or political gain. As a highly paid professional basketball player, he neither put his earnings in tax shelters nor endorsed products. He didn't exploit his celebrity. As a senator, he's kept press releases to a minimum while persevering on a few issues that interest him. When the going was tough for tax reform earlier this year, he didn't abandon the cause (as Gephardt seemed to). If he had, the tax reform movement might have collapsed altogether.

Bradley has a maverick streak, but he's not fickle. His switch on *contra* aid galled many Democrats, prompting Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts to mutter that Bradley will "regret" it. Maybe. In any case, Bradley didn't

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make the switch lightly. Like other Democrats, he had called for a negotiated settlement in Central America, but when it was clear that negotiations were going nowhere, he was willing to try something else. For him, voting for *contra* aid was a close call, but it was better than doing nothing at all, which is the position many of his Democratic colleagues were left with. He faced up to the tough choice and didn't balk at splitting with his party and his prior votes.

As a famous ex-athlete who was an All-American in college and played on two professional championship basketball teams, Bradley has star quality. He hasn't sullied this by crass political job seeking. Twice he was courted by Democrats eager for him to run, once in Missouri, once in New Jersey. Twice he said no. He jumped into the Senate race in 1978 only after party leaders had hand-picked their own candidate (not Bradley). Clearly he has his own sense of political timing, which for now doesn't include a presidential bid in 1988.

Why should he change his mind? Bradley is only 43, but a whole new breed of younger Democrats may have won favor by 1992 or 1996. His best shot may be 1988, just as John Kennedy's was 1960. When you're hot, and Bradley is, that's the time to move. This is his moment. One thing's for sure: the Democratic Party is going to nominate a liberal for president in 1988. There's no reason it has to be someone who can't get elected or who shouldn't be elected.

FRED BARNES

WASHINGTON SCENE

DECEPTION RECEPTION

"IF YOU JUST want to rip off people and cheat little old ladies, leave now," the speaker demanded. She paused, as a few members of the audience peered sheepishly around the hotel ballroom. No one rose. Her warning dispensed with, the lesson in ripping people off and cheating little old ladies began.

Ann Stone was speaking about direct mail as part of a two-day seminar on political fund-raising sponsored by a small Washington magazine called *Campaigns and Elections*. Like her mentor, Richard Viguerie, Stone works only for Republican candidates. But at this nonpartisan workshop she shared her wisdom with Democrats, too. Stone's conservative colleagues Bruce Eberle and Rodney A. Smith also were happy to explain state-of-the-art marketing techniques to anyone whose organization sprung for the $295 registration fee. The spectacle was inspiring: political propagandists of all stripes conspiring to figure out what works and what doesn't in the still-young field of postal saturation bombing.

An axiom of the direct mail business is that the biggest challenge is getting someone to open the envelope. Thus the conference experts applied themselves in all earnestness to the question of what kind of container is most likely to command attention. Of course, you're more likely to read a letter that doesn't appear to be another blowhard politician's request for money. So Stone advises candidates to select envelopes that emulate telegrams, express mail dispatches, and medical bills. The biggest fad at the moment is "Fed-Ex look-alikes," which mimic the designs of the express mail carriers. "Overnight Computer Express Service," one envelope proclaims—even though it's sent by third-class, bulk-rate mail.

At the cocktail reception, several printing companies displayed their designs, including oversize orange and blue envelopes that at a distance look like the Federal Express Overnight Letter envelope. Conference participants browsed through the wares, including envelopes that are dead ringers for tax refund checks and water bills. Since they're often printed without an identifiable return address, you have to open the package to find out what's inside. According to Stone, imitation telegrams are especially effective, since "people are happy when they open it and find out it's not bad news." She cautioned, however, "Don't get too close to Western Union. They tend to sue."

In her insistence that direct mail "not lie or tell half-truths," Stone didn't go so far as to suggest that the people whose signatures appear on direct-mail solicitations should actually write them. But she did recommend that the alleged authors be shown their own letters before mailing to prevent embarrassment should the press ask about the contents. It's also important not to worry about complaints of dishonesty, since "guilt is a heavy burden to bear." One of her handouts advised the audience: "The appeals that raise the most money will almost always generate the most complaints." Her solution? "Stop reading the negative mail that comes to your organization."

You're not lying to anyone. You're just "creating an environment where people interact with senators on a personal level," according to Rodney A. Smith, who developed the phenomenally successful solicitations of Senator Jesse Helms and the National Republican Senatorial Committee. He recommends mailings that encourage responses, such as the "Confidential Strategic Review" of 1986 Senate races recently dispatched by his organization. The letter underscored in fluorescent yellow eight races that Republicans were in danger of losing, information that purported to be so secret that the Senatorial Committee asked 100,000 recipients to return the "confidential report." Everyone laughed as Smith recounted how a few poor saps actually fell for the ploy.

Smith also recommends questionnaires, since they generate responses that may turn into contributions. The Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee just sent out a mailing with 17 questions about topics ranging from arms reduction to the importance of reducing the federal deficit. I asked Smith whether anyone bothers to tabulate these answers, or whether the "official campaign survey" is just another reader participation gimmick. Oh yes, Smith said, an organization should keypunch all responses. Those are

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17 pieces of information that "can give you a clue about how to appeal to them next time." If a voter disapproves of SDI, send him a letter denouncing Star Wars.

You might expect reform-minded organizations to complain about the ever more brazen deception that characterizes direct mail solicitations. But good government types are using direct mail themselves to encourage outrage at the proliferation of PACs. For Common Cause, 1985 was the best year since Watergate. People for the American Way is the fastest growing liberal organization in the country, thanks to its skillful use of direct mail. The group sends out solicitations as incendiary as anything Jesse Helms ever affixed his name to. People for the American Way's most recent envelope warns: "Believe me, these men consider *you* their personal enemy." You tear away a paper strip to reveal the name of Willis Carto, and the pseudonyms of Lyndon LaRouche and Louis Farrakhan. Inside is a photograph of a book-burning "a few miles from Washington, D.C." and more hysteria about farewell to freedom.

Even if direct mail is bolstering a few liberal groups, its returns are diminishing for almost everyone else. The Viguerie Company is close to bankruptcy, and Democratic Party fund-raiser Roger Craver has said that contributions to the Democratic National Committee have fallen off 60 percent since the 1984 election. In candid moments, all of the speakers at the seminar acknowledged that despite their increasing technical sophistication, direct mail is slumping badly. They've concocted excuses, ranging from dilution of the donor bases to oversaturation of the mails. But the best explanation may be much more obvious: the novelty of direct mail has worn off, and people are getting tired of the gimmicks and deceit. Perhaps H. L. Mencken is about to be proved wrong. Direct mail firms are managing to go broke by underestimating the intelligence of the American public.

JACOB WEISBERG

From the New Deal to the Reagan revolution.

THE WASHINGTON INTELLECTUAL

BY JEFFERSON MORLEY

NOT SO LONG ago, intellectuals seemed to be the most picked-on weaklings in the school yard of American politics. When George Wallace ran for president in 1972, he blamed "pointy-headed intellectuals" for everything from rising crime and changing sexual mores to busing and the stalemate in Vietnam. Vice President Spiro Agnew had exploited the same theme in 1970 when he attacked the country's "effete corps of impudent snobs," those "nattering nabobs of negativism" who opposed the Nixon administration. Two decades earlier the vocabulary was different but the mood was similar. In the fall of 1952 the epithet "egghead" was coined, apparently by columnist Stewart Alsop, and enjoyed wide circulation. Republicans gleefully used it to deride Democratic nominee Adlai Stevenson and the writers and professors who supported him.

Today this rhetoric is anachronistic. Intellectualism is in political fashion, not least among conservatives. Back in 1968 *Time* magazine mocked anti-war candidate Eugene McCarthy as a "sardonic intellectual." Most 1988 candidates would do cartwheels to win such a label from the newsweeklies. Even faith healer and would-be president Pat Robertson, in many respects the heir to Wallace's constituency, boasts about having a degree from Yale Law School.

Candidates now work to project an intellectual image. Mario Cuomo is today's Adlai Stevenson, but he receives none of the abuse endured by his predecessor. His taste for bookish learning and his semi-scholastic writing are nothing but a political plus. Jack Kemp cultivates a reputation for "ideas." That once would have been suicide in the Republican Party. Now it is one of Kemp's selling points. Along with Gary Hart (the original "new ideas" man), Kemp and Bruce Babbitt are using personal "think tanks" as a way of launching their campaigns before formally announcing. And Jeane Kirkpatrick, whose only political asset is her reputation as steely-willed intellectual, is not a bad bet to land on the Republican ticket in 1988.

These developments symbolize the shift in the center of American intellectual life from New York to Washington. The very notion that Washington was or could be the intellectual capital of the United States would have been regarded as a joke as recently as ten years ago. The tempting crack that the "Washington intellectual" is a contradiction in terms, Reaganism's answer to "plastic glass" or "jumbo shrimp," has a rueful sound. When American politicians across the ideological spectrum aspire to be seen as intellectuals, it is safe to say that either political life or intellectual life has changed.

It's a little bit of both. Intellectualism is considered one

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of the many useful means of winning office, wielding power, and making the country a better place. This isn't unprecedented. A few New Dealers in the 1930s and the more liberal New Frontiersmen in the 1960s regarded themselves as intellectuals. But today political people throughout Washington—from Patrick Moynihan (senator from New York) to Michael Horowitz (David Stockman's former assistant) to Robert Novak (syndicated columnist) to Tom Joe (welfare reform advocate) to Barry Blechman (arms control strategist) to William Bennett (secretary of education)—regard themselves at some level as intellectuals. This is to say nothing of the squadrons of young conservatives who work in congressional offices or intern at some think tank and who speak with touching sincerity of their eagerness to join the "battle of ideas."

What's surprising and unprecedented about this trend is the number of conservatives who are shaping it. Not that conservatives haven't been or can't be intellectuals. But until very recently they have been skeptical about the pretensions of intellectuals in politics—and none more so than conservative intellectuals. Today that skepticism is gone, replaced by the boundless confidence of the liberal intellectual of 25 years ago. There is nothing more characteristic of the Washington intellectual than confidence.

THE WASHINGTON intellectual was not created in the last five years or even in the last 15. The rise of the Washington intellectual goes back at least 50 years, and is part of the rise of Washington. In the 1930s New York was the seat of national power, and intellectual life coalesced in Manhattan. Until the mid-1930s the deliberations of the New York Fed were more important than those of the Federal Reserve Board in Washington. The national media, centered in book publishing and the magazines, were headquartered in New York. With the rise of the electronic media and the movies, this industry dispersed. Publishing lost its dominance. The entertainment wing of the media went west to Hollywood. A national news media emerged, and focused on Washington.

The growth of the federal government during and after World War II exerted a gravitational force on intellectual disciplines like the law and economics. This drift goes on, regardless of ideological fashion. Today federalism and deregulation may be in vogue, but the job market in Washington for conservative legal scholars and free market economists has never been better. Within the federal government "policy shops" have sprung up devoted to research and speculation about ideas. Outside the government, the role of the United States in world politics since the war has created a vast and diverse research industry centered in Washington. The boom in op-ed pages, opinion sections, and news analysis articles in the last 15 years has raised the intellectual level of the national media and their Washington staffs.

There is now a thriving market for people who can speculate about ideas in institutions that didn't exist at all 50 years ago. These jobs are often in what is called "policy studies," a branch of academic life distinct from the humanities, the social sciences, and the sciences. Policy studies is the halfway house between university life and Washington life. In their more academic forms, policy studies institutions, such as the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, provide training for intellectual work in the public sector.

In their more politicized forms, these institutions are often more closely integrated into Washington than into their own mother institutions. The Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington is nominally connected with Georgetown University. Georgetown's campus is only a few miles from downtown Washington, but that apparently is too far from the action for CSIS. Its offices are located right down the street from the White House.

The traditional Washington think tanks are also changing. They have grown in number in recent years, especially on the right, and they also have shaken off the somnolent high-mindedness they once specialized in. The hot think tanks now are smaller organizations that combine research and publication with aggressive advocacy. On the left these new organizations directly descended from the protest movements of the late 1960s and the consumer movements of the early 1970s. They have evolved into permanent groups such as the Washington Office on Latin America, which opposes the administration's Central America policy, and the Center for Tax Justice, which has led the fight for tax reform.

The right has adopted this activist model over the last ten years. Its organizations and publications tend to be funded by conservative foundations. Indeed, one influential and unstudied organization, the Institute for Educational Affairs, does nothing but tell right-wing donors where to invest their intellectual dollars. Whether on the left, right, or center, these new organizations are staffed by people who once would have been graduate students or assistant professors—and hence more recognizable as intellectuals.

THE HISTORY OF the Washington intellectual is in part the history of a debate about the role of the intellectual in public life. One side has spoken for the ideal of intellectual independence, the other for the ideal of intellectual responsibility. In 1956 the intellectual historian H. Stuart Hughes joined this debate because he could see the Washington intellectual coming. In a prescient essay for *Commentary* called "Is the Intellectual Obsolete?" Hughes stressed that freely speculating intellectuals had to be distinguished from "mental technicians." He defined the mental technician as the intellectual who produced "bright ideas for essentially practical purposes masking as intellectual activity." He lamented that the mental technicians were likely to prosper, financially and otherwise. "Eventually even the intangible factors of leisure and prestige may begin to favor the mental technician over the creative writer or scholar," he wrote.

The danger, Hughes stressed, was not political compromise. It was professional compromise. He spoke for the ideal of intellectual life that sees impracticality as the best

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guarantee of intellectual freedom. He didn't think that intellectual life was an exalted calling or that intellectuals were entrusted with great responsibilities. He simply believed that intellectuals should stick to what they do best, speculating about ideas, even if it wasn't in their immediate self-interest. Intellectuals lost their purpose when they strayed outside their own small unpractical sphere. By raising the question of obsolescence, Hughes perhaps sensed that his plea was already too late.

BY THE TIME Hughes wrote his article, the opposing ideal, of responsibility, had become common. As the Washington intellectual has gained prominence, this ideal has become a dominant view among American intellectuals. The New Deal intellectuals, often inspired by Harvard Law School professor Felix Frankfurter, had stressed that their duty was to influence and exercise power as their learning and judgment dictated. After the war, liberal intellectuals such as historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. offered an even more ambitious formulation of this ideal. They denied Hughes's view that culture was best understood and shaped by stepping back from politics. Rather, they insisted that engagement in politics was a kind of cultural exploration in and of itself. They could engage in political action and, by doing so, act in the broader interests of culture.

In the first ideal of intellectual life, culture defined politics, and it was the intellectual's job to study culture. In the second ideal, politics defined culture, and it was the intellectual's job to engage in politics. The first was the ideal of the small group of former Marxist intellectuals in New York who wrote for the *Partisan Review*. They had originally thought they could champion Marxism in politics and modernism in culture. When the politics put humiliating strictures on the culture, they made the exploration of culture their ideal and subordinated politics to it. Ironically, as the *Partisan Review* intellectuals—the New York intellectuals—were gaining prominence in the late 1940s and early 1950s, their ideal of critical independence was losing sway. The confrontation with totalitarianism made political engagement the more attractive ideal.

The drift was clear by 1960. In Senator John F. Kennedy, Schlesinger and other liberal intellectuals found their vehicle for advancing their political goals. Schlesinger cleverly elevated the lack of ideology to a kind of ideology itself. He looked for Kennedy not only to promote political goals but to reinvigorate American life and culture. Less sophisticated observers could see that Kennedy was an ambitious, cautious, publicity conscious politician, and not an intellectual prince. Kennedy tolerated the intellectuals only to the extent that they provided "bright ideas for essentially practical purposes." But the alliance between Kennedy and his intellectual admirers was mutually beneficial. The president got his mental technicians. The intellectuals got their proximity to power. As historian Christopher Lasch noted in his book *The New Radicalism in America*, "The confusion, in the mind of the intellectuals, between intellect itself and the interests of the intellectuals as a class had become almost complete, though the two things, in truth, had never been more hopelessly at odds."

This newly ascendant intellectual class, of course, was predominantly liberal and had been ever since the New Deal. Thus it was in the self-interest of liberals as well as of intellectuals to celebrate the importance of intellectuals. When Barry Goldwater won the 1964 Republican presidential nomination as a challenger to the pretensions of the New Frontiersmen, the liberal intellectuals were filled with foreboding. In a *Partisan Review* symposium on Goldwater in 1964, the only person who could muster a good word for the Republican presidential nominee was critic Richard Poirier. He noted that, if nothing else, Goldwater's supporters harbored "a desire to make American politics something more than a form of management."

The remark was a sign that the debate about the role of the intellectual in public life had changed. Hughes's contrast between the freely speculating intellectual and the mental technician had been reduced to a debate about the mental technician. Should he or she be a manager, solving society's problems at home and abroad? Or should the intellectual in politics aspire for more, for shaping the broader culture? Should the intellectual's goal be expertise or ideology? The choice wasn't as sharp as it might seem. Either way the intellectual occupied a crucial role in politics. Politically, though, this split would divide the mostly liberal Washington intellectuals for years to come.

IT WAS BEST symbolized by the founding of the *Public Interest* magazine in 1965 by sociologists Daniel Bell and Irving Kristol, liberals who were disturbed by the ideological drift of the times. Their magazine of the social sciences was the offspring of the *Partisan Review*, except it was not directed at New York intellectuals. Although based in New York, the *Public Interest* was perhaps the first magazine intended solely for Washington intellectuals. It aimed solely to help Washington intellectuals solve problems they confronted while working in government. In their inaugural issue Bell and Kristol denounced ideology and the impulse to make politics something more than management. They were afraid of the Goldwater movement, but they were more worried about the growth of the New Left.

They saw that the ideology of non-ideology was losing its attractiveness. Liberal intellectuals, even liberal Washington intellectuals, were dissatisfied with being mental technicians and were disturbed by the war in Vietnam. Those who took seriously the New Frontier rhetoric of reviving American culture and life were increasingly attracted by the left. But joining the left meant distancing oneself from Washington. Bell and Kristol's ideal of intellectual service to the public interest remained compelling, but it now required narrower ambitions and a willingness to reconcile oneself to the war at the very moment that President Johnson began the B-52 bombing of North Vietnam. The tension between maintaining even the illusion of critical independence and influencing power had never been higher.

In any case, it was clear by the mid 1960s that Hughes's

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AND THE L.A. INTELLECTUAL?

As a native Angeleno, I refuse to believe that intellectual life is impossible in our nation's second largest city. Los Angeles has everything going for it, especially over New York. It's not falling apart. You're not harassed mercilessly by criminals (it's hard to mug somebody doing 65 on the freeway). L.A.'s economy is buoyed by the Pacific trade, and by a vast population of hardworking illegal immigrants. The people are as smart as New Yorkers. Hell, most of the people *are* New Yorkers who were smart enough to get out.

I reject the conceit of Manhattanites that the sheer ease of Southern California life makes serious thought impossible, that only hailing cabs in the rain and standing rigidly against the wall in the subway (so the derelicts can't push you in front of the oncoming train) build the "edge" necessary for a vibrant life of the mind.

And yet I must confess my terrible secret. I, booster of L.A., West Coast correspondent of TNR, have in fact fled the suburb of my birth for Washington, D.C., precisely because of the bitter truth I have tried so long to suppress: there is no intellectual life in Los Angeles, at least not the kind I'm interested in, which is political culture. (New York can keep the art and opera, as far as I'm concerned.) For someone interested in debating the fate of America, New York is a good place to be, Chicago seems like a good place to be, and Washington is the best place to be. L.A. is no place to be.

Why? It's not the absence of universities—UCLA is just as great a citadel of learning as Georgetown or NYU, and the library is much better. Especially because the books are never checked out. I blame three factors:

The Los Angeles Times: People on the East Coast all think the *L.A. Times* is a great paper, but they don't have to read it every day. The *Times* is like General Motors—big, rich, bursting with talent, virtually all of it wasted making a bland, timid product. Proprietor Otis Chandler apparently feels so guilty about his ancestors' robber-baron excess that he is determined to produce a paper that will offend no one. Charles Truehart has accurately summarized the paper's editorial policy: "For the *L.A. Times*, everything remains to be seen." Or negotiated by all parties as part of the Contadora process. This more-responsible-than-thou attitude infects the paper's news coverage as well. Jean Sharley Taylor, who oversees the *Times*'s eight "soft" news sections, proudly told Rian Malan in *California* magazine: "You can destroy a woman by saying her voice rose shrilly, rather than just rose. When I see those things coming through, I stop them." As you might guess, this makes for exciting reading.

California's political pot is certainly filled with spicy ingredients—Tom Hayden, Bob Dornan, Rose Bird, and Willie Brown, to name a few—but the *Times* editors don't seem to have a clue as to how to keep it boiling. *Times* reporters disdain quotidian stories. They want to get "behind the news." (The motto of editor William Thomas is "Do It Once, Do It Right, Do It Long." Honest.) So Bradley will call Deukmejian a "scumbag," say. The *L.A. Herald*, which nobody reads, will have a six-inch story. The *Times* will have nothing. Then Deukmejian will call Bradley a "clod." Again, nothing. Three days later the *Times* will produce a knowing, midrange retrospective under a headline like "Governor's Race Heating Up." But of course the governor's race can't heat up when the state's biggest paper doesn't let the candidates stoke the furnace.

Defenders of the *Times* say it's only giving L.A. readers what they want—color pictures of sailboats rather than political hurly-burly. But that's no excuse. A different paper run by different people would help *create* a culture that thrived on controversy. If you print boring op-ed pieces, you create boring readers.

The Washington Post. The presence of the *Times* is rendered more oppressive by the absence of the *Post*. The *Post* is indispensable for keeping in touch with the wild, irrational mood swings of national politics (that is, Washington). But the *Post* does not travel beyond the Eastern seaboard. Even those provincial newsstands that used to carry the *Post* have switched to its unsatisfying weekly edition. At about three places in Southern California you can buy a real *Post* for $1.95, a day late.

The result, despite jet travel and computer telecommunications, is an inevitable, deadening lag between what happens in Washington and what you hear 3,000 miles away. The national *N.Y. Times* and the "McLaughlin Group" can't take up the slack. By the time you hear that Pat Caddell is boosting Dwight Gooden for president, everybody on the East Coast knows he's switched to Bruce Springsteen. When you're worried about Gramm-Rudman, Washington's worried about Don Regan. By the time you're worried about Regan, Washington's in a tizzy over Gramm-Rudman again.

Show Business: Of course, the people in L.A. who would be intellectuals in other cities don't worry about Gramm-Rudman at all. They worry about whether Pierce Brosnan will be the new James Bond. (Problem: he has no chest, and James Bond must be able to take off his shirt.) This is the oft-lamented, pervasive influence of the entertainment industry. In L.A. I play in a softball game that started out as a contest between reporters and editors. Now it's a contest between screenwriters and producers. Same people. Why work hard for $25,000 a year when you can make that much in a week if Paramount buys your treatment? If Dorothy Parker and William Faulkner couldn't resist this corrupting influence, guys like me don't have a chance.

I knew I had to get out when I attended the tenth anniversary party of *California*, the classiest general interest magazine in the state. I could imagine what the tenth anniversary of a magazine like *New York* must have been like—feuding literary celebrities, drug-fueled decadence, media-hungry developers, and cute little punkettes. But this event had the atmosphere of a Washington Independent Writers potluck supper. Scraggly groups of depressed journalists gathered in the corners, complaining about kill fees and plotting their screenplay deals. No celebrities of any kind appeared to validate our importance. Everybody went home at 9.

MICKEY KAUS

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ideal of the "freely speculating mind" had lost out. Irving Howe described exactly how in his obituary for "The New York Intellectuals," written in 1967. What had motivated the New York intellectual, Howe wrote, "was not . . . the quest for money, nor even a chance to 'mix' with White House residents; it was finally . . . a gnawing ambition to write something, even three pages, that might live." Howe noted that, unlike the Washington intellectual, few of them "approached any centers of power, and precisely the buzz of gossip attending the one or two sometimes invited to a party beyond the well-surveyed limits of the West Side showed how confined their life still was."

Howe explained, as Hughes had, that it was too simplistic to say that the allure of power would cause intellectuals to sell out to conservatism (although that did happen in some cases). Howe was just as critical of the New Left intellectuals who, after a promising start, reverted to all the old habits they had hoped to break. He lamented that, just like the liberal and conservative intellectuals who had not opposed McCarthy, the radical intellectuals who would not oppose the new Stalinism had surrendered their critical independence in their pursuit of political influence and power. Everywhere Howe looked (including the mirror) he saw intellectuals who viewed engagement in the political world as the highest calling in intellectual life.

THE LOW EBB of the Washington intellectual in the early 1970s was deceptive. Yes, Agnew and Wallace embodied a larger backlash against McGovern (whom most intellectuals supported). Yes, the New Left intellectuals had self-destructed with the descent of SDS into the terrorist Weather Underground. Yes, the Vietnam War and the failures of the Great Society discredited the Kennedy and Johnson intellectuals. But the notion that politics defined culture, and that it was therefore the intellectual's job to engage in politics, not only survived—it flourished.

It flourished most in the two places where it was least expected: on the right, and among the *Public Interest* intellectuals who had prided themselves on being mental technicians. Everyone else was in disarray. The intellectual left was retreating from the barricades to the library. Liberal intellectuals increasingly found themselves in cultural debates over abortion, over feminism, over school prayer. Their superficial conception of cultural renewal as a by-product of electoral politics gave them no way to understand the political implications of these issues except in the crude terms of "liberation" versus "repression."

The conservative resurgency, with its roots in the Wallace and Goldwater movements, increasingly took on a self-consciously intellectual stance. Wallace might scorn the pointy heads in Washington, but in 1973 a Wallace sympathizer, Paul Weyrich, convinced brewer Joe Coors to fund an institution for pointy heads in Washington. Thus the most powerful institution of the New Right, the Heritage Foundation, was born.

As this movement grew, it had a latent appeal that was easy to overlook. It reserved a central role for intellectuals, especially Washington intellectuals. Although fervently populist, it saw the need for an elite movement to do battle with the ideology of the liberal establishment. This was not incompatible with the view of disillusioned liberals such as Kristol who had spoken for the social science elite against the ideological mob. A shared distaste for liberal intellectuals enabled the Wallace-Goldwater conservatives and the disillusioned liberals to become allies. The corporate community, waking up to the costs of safety and environmental regulation, was similarly inclined to take on the Washington intellectuals who articulated the case for regulation. The fundamentalist movement that emerged in the late 1970s had no intellectual pretensions, but they too demonized liberalism. Again there was a useful alliance. The fundamentalists were elevated above know-nothings. The crusade of the conservative intellectuals was invested with a moral and populist aura.

With the election of Ronald Reagan, the work of remaking the culture was divvied up. The fundamentalists took on the counterculture of the 1960s as it had been incorporated into the mainstream of American life. Neoconservatives took on the "culture of appeasement" that had allegedly enervated American foreign policy. The free market conservatives undertook to rehabilitate the culture of capitalism. And those with a social conscience were assigned the job of battling the "culture of poverty." Conservative intellectuals claim they are merely dismantling the old liberal paternalism. In practical terms, though, it is certain that the ranks of conservative intellectuals in Washington will grow indefinitely. If the conservative intellect denies the importance of Washington, the self-interest of the conservative intellectual celebrates it. The work of a Washington intellectual, liberal or conservative, is never done.

THE COMPLETE LOSS of skepticism about the pretensions of intellectuals marks a turning point for American conservatism. The logic of this transformation becomes clear in Kristol's indictment of the "The Adversary Culture of Intellectuals."

Writing in 1979, Kristol could no longer idealize non-ideological social science as the way to fine-tune the public interest. The public interest, he now argued, lay in the preservation of bourgeois society. Intellectuals, he said, are hostile to this world for two reasons. First, because it is based on self-interest, not on the more intellectually appealing but more insidious idea of "the common good." And second because the bourgeois order is mundane, based on commerce rather than on a vision of human perfection. The former is the basis for Marxism, the latter for modernism. The combination of the two is "the adversary culture" that endangers bourgeois society.

But as for finding defenders of the bourgeois order, Kristol was forced to fall back on enlisting—who else?—the intellectuals. The members of bourgeois society—devoted to commerce, to their own self-interest, to the private pursuit of happiness—could not be counted on to drop their virtuous activities to push dreams of "the common good." Their unwillingness to do so is at least in part

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their virtue. Somebody else—somebody willing to act in the public interest—has to do the job. Kristol thought "the Judeo-Christian tradition" could be useful in defeating the adversary culture, but he had little confidence in the churches. He concluded that the salvation of bourgeois society, if it were to come at all, would come from the "thoughts germinating in the mind of some young unknown philosopher or theologian." In short, from a new kind of intellectual who would act disinterestedly on behalf of all of bourgeois society.

Kristol has succumbed to the same illusions that he attributed to socialist intellectuals. In his essay, he had mocked intellectuals for their complacent assumption that they had transcended their own self-interest and could or would act on behalf of "the common good" in leading their political movement. He said, "As intellectuals, they are qualified candidates for membership in the elite that leads such a movement and they can thus give free expression to their natural impulse for authority and power. They can do so, moreover, within an ideological context, which reassures them that, any superficial evidence to the contrary notwithstanding, they are disinterestedly serving the 'true' interests of the people." This is exactly the faith of the conservative Washington intellectuals today.

Will conservative intellectuals entrust themselves (and a few fundamentalist preachers) with the semi-clerical role of restoring "the Judeo-Christian tradition"? Or will they acknowledge that their ambitions may reflect self-interest as much as anything else, and return to a more modest role of speculating about the self-destructive impulses of a bourgeois society?

It all depends on their conception of what an intellectual should do. Liberal and left intellectuals disturbed by the fundamentalist ambitions of conservative intellectuals would do well to recall how their own ambitions have contributed to the emergence of the Washington intellectual. They might go back to Hughes or Howe, or listen to the intellectuals of Central Europe, who, though unequivocally anti-communist, do not fit anywhere on our spectrum of political intellectuals. One of them, Polish poet Adam Zagajewski, offered this advice at the PEN conference in New York last January. He said, "We, powerful in our unpractical sphere of images and penetration, envy politicians their power. It is a mistake. . . . We have to be vigilant but we should not leave our field, our sphere. . . . We do not bear practical responsibility. We are bearing intellectual responsibility because we are trying to decipher the meaning of the world."

Paleocons versus neocons.

THE CONSERVATIVE WARS

BY JOHN B. JUDIS

IN THE EARLY 1950s, the most popular book on the American right was John T. Beaty's *The Iron Curtain Over America*, an account of how an obscure group of Russian Jews, the Khazars, had finessed the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the liberal takeover of the Democratic Party and were steadily undermining "Christian civilization." Beaty's book went through 14 printings from 1951 to 1955, and it inspired the formation of Willis Carto's Liberty Lobby. Today *The Iron Curtain Over America* is forgotten, and the Liberty Lobby is merely a footnote in the history of libel law. The virulent anti-Semitism and nativism that ran through the American right from the 1920s through the early 1950s has largely dissipated.

But in the last three months, two disputes have broken out among conservatives that suggest the right's anti-Semitic past is not entirely gone. In a symposium in the *Intercollegiate Review*, a magazine published by the oldest conservative student organization, the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, and in a meeting last May in Chicago of a conservative organization called the Philadelphia Society, "old right" or "traditionalist" conservatives took the offensive against neoconservatives, denying them the very label "conservative." Some observers said the traditionalists' charges were subtly laced with anti-Semitism.

About the same time another controversy arose between neoconservative Midge Decter, the director of the Committee on the Free World, and Joseph Sobran, a columnist and a senior editor of *National Review*. Based on some recent columns by Sobran, Decter accused him in a widely circulated letter of being a "crude and naked anti-Semite."

The quarrel between the traditionalists and the neoconservatives first broke out in 1981, when neoconservative William Bennett bested University of Dallas English professor M. E. Bradford for the chairmanship of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The neoconservatives, led by Irving Kristol, the editor of *Public Interest*, waged a vigorous campaign against Bradford, centered on Bradford's

John B. Judis, a senior editor of *In These Times*, is completing a biography of William F. Buckley Jr.

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scholarly denigration of Lincoln, his opposition to the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and his support in 1968 and 1972 of Alabama segregationist George Wallace for president.

Bradford's position on civil rights was and remains different from that of Kristol and other neoconservatives. As he put it in an interview, he stands for "a narrow interpretation of equality before the law," one that extends to voting rights but not to private property, whereas the neoconservatives advocate "equality of opportunity." (For instance, Bradford opposed the 1964 Civil Rights Act because it forbade discrimination in hotels, restaurants, and other public accommodations.) But Bradford believes that the neoconservatives were really concerned with patronage rather than politics. "It was a question of who was going to get their boy put in," Bradford said.

In 1985 Bradford became president of the Philadelphia Society, an organization of conservative intellectuals that was formed after the Goldwater defeat in 1964. The Philadelphia Society holds an annual meeting that is generally devoted to conservative theory rather than politics. Burton Pines, the vice president of the Heritage Foundation, described past meetings as "extraordinarily tame." But in 1986 Bradford organized the meeting around the theme of neoconservatism, and he invited as speakers a group of traditionalists who had been spoiling for a fight.

MOST OF THE traditionalists—including Bradford, University of Michigan historian Stephen Tonsor, and University of South Carolina historian Clyde Wilson—are academics who have always been conservatives and who trace their lineage to Russell Kirk's 1953 book, *The Conservative Mind*. They value order and organic community, class and natural aristocracy. They abhor mass democracy and egalitarianism. They see Christian belief as the foundation of morality and law. Some, like Bradford and Wilson, reflect the legacy of Calhoun and the Confederacy. Others, like Tonsor, appear more influenced by anti-Enlightenment European authoritarianism.

The traditionalists accused the neoconservatives of being social science technicians rather than philosophers, and of assisting in the very "politicization" of society that conservatism had been pledged to resist. They also accused the neoconservatives of being welfare-state liberals and cultural modernists who had appropriated the term and spoils of conservatism for purely opportunistic ends.

In the *Intercollegiate Review* Bradford described the neoconservatives as "interlopers" who "want all the persuasive advantages that come from calling their view conservative regardless of its essentially statist, pacifist, and coercively egalitarian implications." In another article, Paul Gottfried, an editor of a monthly magazine called *The World and I* published by the *Washington Times*, expressed his amazement that "welfare-state Democrats . . . have taken over once conservative publications and institutions." Clyde Wilson, echoing the white Protestants' outrage at the immigrant alien, lamented, "We have simply been crowded out by overwhelming numbers. The offensives of radicalism have driven vast herds of liberals across the border into our territories. These refugees speak in our name, but the language they speak is the same one they always spoke. It contains no words for the things that we value. Our estate has been taken over by an imposter, just as we were about to inherit."

Some of the themes voiced in Chicago struck even some conservatives as at best "anti-cosmopolitanism" (Burton Pines's term) and at worst "anti-Semitic." The speech that most troubled the neoconservatives was by Stephen Tonsor. What one neoconservative described as a "hooded" version was printed in *National Review.* Like Bradford and the others, Tonsor attacked the neoconservatives for being interlopers. Referring to their leftist pasts, he remarked, "It is splendid when the town whore gets religion and joins the church. Now and then she makes a good choir director, but when she begins to tell the minister what he ought to say in his Sunday sermons, matters have been carried too far."

Tonsor identified conservatism with Christianity. Ignoring the seminal role played in the 1950s by Jewish or agnostic intellectuals such as Henry Hazlitt, Willi Schlamm, James Burnham, Frank Meyer, Max Eastman, Eugene Lyons, Ralph de Toledano, Leo Strauss, and Milton Friedman, Tonsor declared that conservatism's "world view is Roman or Anglo Catholic." In contrast, Tonsor identified neoconservatism with the "instantiation of modernity among secularized Jewish intellectuals." Commenting on Tonsor's speech and the articles in the *Intercollegiate Review*, Midge Decter said, "It's this notion of a Christian civilization. You have to be part of it or you're not really fit to conserve anything. That's an old line and it's very ignorant."

There were also intimations in Chicago that the neoconservatives were more loyal to Israel than to the United States—a charge of "dual loyalty" that the anti-Semitic right of the late 1940s and early 1950s (when Zionism was a liberal cause) had leveled against Democratic supporters of Israel. In subsequent interviews, the traditionalists made these charges explicit. Russell Kirk, who tried to calm the tempers at the Chicago meeting, said in a telephone interview: "What really animates the neoconservatives, especially Irving Kristol, is the preservation of Israel. That lies in back of everything." Paul Gottfried said, "I don't think one can differentiate the neoconservatives from the very large Jewish composition of the movement, and the fact that many of the Jewish leaders of the movement broke from the left precisely over the question of Israel and other Jewish issues and therefore are going to take a very strong pro-Israeli position." He added, "I happen to think that position corresponds to American interests, but I think the neoconservatives would make it appear such no matter what."

A WEEK AFTER the Philadelphia Society meeting, the *National Review* editors held their quarterly meeting. On the agenda was what to do about the storm of controversy that was swirling around Sobran. He had run afoul of neoconservatives before. In *National Review* he had been

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critical periodically of Israeli policies, and in April 1985 he had written a series of columns defending Reagan's visit to Bitburg in which he took what seemed like gratuitous shots at the "Jewish lobby" and the *New York Times*. (Sobran wrote that the *Times* "really ought to change its name to *Holocaust Update*.") Then, in columns last April and May, he appeared to his critics to cross the line between opposition to Israeli policy and anti-Semitism.

In a column on the raid against Libya, Sobran wrote that the *Times*, "one of America's most ardently Zionist newspapers, understands that Israel has its own reasons for desiring to pit the United States against the whole Arab

Ghosts Of Leftists Past

"Our universities as institutions have moved rapidly and massively to the left—and, more often than not, toward the extremities of the left." So wrote Irving Kristol, not 20 years ago, but on June 17 in the *Wall Street Journal*. Norman Podhoretz recently stated in the *Washington Post* that "it is hardly an exaggeration to say that the Ivy League colleges have become the most narrow-minded and bigoted communities since the passing of the old American small town. . . . Harvard and Yale will have much the same effect on a young liberal as Oral Roberts or Bob Jones universities on a young fundamentalist Christian." And Secretary of Education William Bennett announced in a speech on May 14 to the American Jewish Committee that "academic totalitarians are turning our universities into a kind of fortress at war with society, an arsenal whose principal talk is to raise 'revolutionary consciousness.' "

Charges like these appear constantly in the conservative press. Two newsletters, published by Accuracy in Academia and the Campus Coalition for Democracy, are solely devoted to exposing "left-wing bias" on campus. More than 40 right-wing campus newspapers, all funded by conservative foundations, repeat the same theme. What is going on?

Neoconservatives have often said, with some reason, that universities are more hospitable to liberal and radical ideas than to conservative ones. Now they are erasing the distinctions between liberals and radicals, and are claiming that "the left" has illegitimately come to dominate universities.

First, they say, a minority of radical students has disrupted campus life with tactics that range from heckling conservative speakers to constructing South African-style "shanties" on leafy quadrangles. Second, a new generation of radical professors is promoting its own sectarian agenda at the expense of scholarship and academic freedom. And third, to quote Kristol, "a dozen or more varieties of Marxism . . . along with a dozen or more equally radical but non-Marxist philosophies, have almost completely reshaped many of the academic disciplines themselves."

What evidence is there for these sweeping assertions? Very little. In the case of heckling, the events most often cited are those of 1983, when Jeane Kirkpatrick was interrupted at the universities of Minnesota and California, and Caspar Weinberger at Harvard. Podhoretz now admits that "visiting speakers holding those [conservative] ideas . . . are not booed or shouted down as often as they used to be."

What about the omnipresence of Bennett's radical "academic totalitarians"? A 1984 Carnegie Foundation poll of 5,000 academics found 33.8 percent calling themselves "liberal," 56.2 percent "middle of the road" or "moderately conservative," and only 5.8 percent "left." One may argue that small numbers can wield excessive influence, but is this "domination"?

Kristol claims that "a whole spectrum of radical modes of thinking, with their own technical, esoteric vocabularies, dominates American academic life." But is this so in political science, where conservative Democrat Samuel Huntington was recently elected president of the American Political Science Association? Or in economics, where the Keynesians are in disarray, the Marxists a tiny minority, and the many "Chicago Schools" so influential? In literature, structuralists and deconstructionists may employ "technical, esoteric vocabularies"—but Marxists attack them for it. Where's the "domination"?

In the June 1985 issue of the *New Criterion*, Norman Cantor of New York University called Princeton history professor Lawrence Stone a "Marxist." When a colleague of Stone's wrote a one-paragraph letter in his defense, the magazine published a five-page reply from Cantor in which he called the Princeton history department "a central school for the indoctrination of the young into Marxist ideology." The outburst drew criticism from two respected conservative historians, Gertrude Himmelfarb and J. H. Hexter. Hexter wrote: "Several years ago . . . I began a slow quiet crawl to the right—and there I find Norman Cantor. Guess I'll start crawling back."

What do the neoconservatives want? Kristol says that "never in American history have these universities so militantly divorced themselves from the sentiments and opinions of the overwhelming majority of the people." But why should the character of the university reflect the political opinions of the nation? Few conservatives would demand that 12 percent of university professors be black, so why should 60 percent be Reaganite? And if the nation returns to liberalism, should the universities then stop looking for conservatives to hire?

It is ironic that those who once protested the politicization of American intellectual life by the left are now trying to politicize the universities. The same people who once objected to ideology in the name of intellectual complexity have become ideologues. Moreover, the neoconservatives seem to have forgotten where many of them came from—and where the young leftists of today may be tomorrow. *Commentary* now publishes former editors of *Ramparts*. From new-Marxism to neoconservatism can be a short trip.

David A. Bell

David A. Bell, a former TNR reporter-researcher, is a graduate student in history at Princeton.

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world. So bombs away." Sobran's column suggested that the *Times*, whose controlling stockholders are Jewish, was more faithful to Israeli than American interests. In a column on Jewish reactions to the pope's visit to a Jewish synagogue, Sobran equated the historic Christian persecution of the European Jews with alleged Jewish persecution of Christians. Sobran wrote, "If Christians were sometimes hostile to Jews, that worked two ways." Sobran offered no example of Jewish persecution of Christians to match, say, the Inquisition. Finally, in a column on racism, Sobran described *Instauration*, a viciously racist and anti-Semitic magazine, as "often brilliant" and the only "magazine in America that faces the harder facts about race."

SOBRAN'S COLUMNS sparked several private protests, and ultimately Decter's letter. The editor of *National Review*, William F. Buckley, responded a week later. While denying that Sobran was an anti-Semite, he acknowledged that "what Joe needs to know is that certain immunities 'properly' attach to pro-Israel sentiment for historical reasons." At *National Review*'s quarterly editorial conference, Buckley and the magazine's editors demanded that Sobran stop writing about Israel. In the magazine's pages, Buckley again denied that Sobran is an anti-Semite but admitted that "any person, who, given the knowledge of the reigning protocols, read and agonized over the half-dozen columns by Joe Sobran might reasonably conclude that those columns were written by a writer inclined to anti-Semitism." Buckley declared that he and the other editors dissociated themselves "from what we view as the obstinate tendentiousness of Joe Sobran's recent columns."

With Buckley's statement, the neoconservatives declared victory and went home. Midge Decter said she was overjoyed. "It was a graceful way of dissociating himself from Sobran." Leslie Lenkowsky, the director of the Institute for Educational Affairs in Washington, termed Buckley's response "admirable." But some of the traditionalists felt aggrieved. Paul Gottfried said that "the neoconservatives blew this [controversy] up hysterically." Bradford acknowledged that Sobran's columns violated a certain "decorum," but he contended that the neoconservatives did the same. Decter's letter, Bradford said, "poisons the waters." Russell Kirk agreed, saying that he "was very surprised at Midge Decter's intolerance. It seems that she would forbid any prudential discussion of these matters."

The neoconservatives had taken the field against Sobran and against Gore Vidal, who had made similar charges of dual loyalty in the *Nation*, but they are disinclined to pick a fight with the weightier traditionalists. Asked to comment on the controversy, Irving Kristol said, "I won't say anything. Anything that I say is only going to throw fuel on the flames. I'll wait for it to pass. It'll pass." Norman Podhoretz, Decter's husband and the editor of *Commentary*, said, "I am embroiled in too many controversies about anti-Semitism. I am not looking for another fight." Neoconservatives in Washington refused to comment on the record. One prominent neoconservative admitted that he was disturbed by "this anti-Semitism" but added, "You're never going to get me to quote this," meaning he wouldn't say so publicly.

The neoconservatives are concerned not to debase the charge of anti-Semitism. But their reluctance is based on a conviction, shared by other conservatives, that the traditionalists are a dying breed who are without significant influence either within the academy or the government. The intellectual tradition of which they are a part, Podhoretz says, "has pretty much lost its vitality." Burton Pines compares the traditionalists to the Old Bolsheviks who were passed by during the revolution.

The traditionalists are not willing, however, to let the quarrel subside. Paul Gottfried is planning a special issue of *The World and I* about neoconservatism. Bradford has written a 6,000-word analysis of Norman Podhoretz's work for the issue. In reading over Podhoretz's *Making It* and *Breaking Ranks*, Bradford has discovered that he and Podhoretz belong not only to rival political but also to rival literary traditions. "Maybe this whole thing is deeper than I understand," he said.

CONSERVATIVES NOT not closely associated with either camp do not believe that the quarrel between the traditionalists and neoconservatives is of any lasting significance. But there are two ways in which these controversies could resonate. First, anti-Semitism aside, some of the traditionalists' qualms about American policy toward Israel and their views of civil rights and the welfare state probably reflect the opinion of many Republican conservatives and grass-roots Republicans. The traditionalists' critique of the neoconservatives—though failing to win converts for Burke and Calhoun—has nonetheless exposed the extent to which neoconservatives are unassimilated intellectuals. They remain poised between Democratic liberalism and Reagan conservatism.

Second, the fading away of the traditionalists leaves a certain vacuum that the neoconservatives cannot fill. For three decades the traditionalists have helped to anchor conservatism—not so much by providing a philosophy that could guide policy as by providing a kind of faith and vision. They have been the high priests who consecrated the politician's or the publicist's more mundane concerns.

By contrast, the neoconservatives have made an invaluable contribution to conservatism's ability to govern, but they have not attempted to define conservatism's higher ends. Many of the neoconservatives are impatient with conservative doctrinal questions. "They call me a conservative, so I call myself a conservative," Midge Decter says. "But I am sick and tired of the whole discussion."

A movement's loss of a philosophical core is often the first sign of its decline. When the liberals of the late 1940s abandoned not merely communism but democratic socialism, they retained their ability to govern, but lost their ability to inspire. The young of the 1960s did not become liberals but "radicals." The plight of the traditionalists may be a sign of the conservative movement's growing political maturity, but it may also augur the movement's growing lack of inner conviction. □

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A primer on exchange rates.

DON'T GO FOR THE GOLD

BY JEFFREY SACHS

UNTIL RECENTLY, international monetary reform was not a glamorous issue. When the world monetary system was collapsing in the early 1970s, Bob Haldeman rushed into the Oval Office to announce that there was dangerous speculation against the Italian lira. The Watergate transcripts record President Nixon's classic response: "I don't give a [expletive deleted] about the lira." Now everybody is talking about exchange rates. They dominated the Tokyo economic summit in May. Representative Jack Kemp sees monetary reform as his ticket to the White House in 1988.

But exchange rates are a strange political issue. They do not pit liberals against conservatives or the president against Congress. Nor is there an orthodoxy of the economics profession, as there is, say, about free trade. Monetarist Milton Friedman and Keynesian Paul Samuelson are staunch defenders of floating rates, while supply-side guru Robert Mundell and former Carter administration official Richard Cooper urge a move back toward fixed exchange rates.

History provides little guide for many of the questions in the current debate. For most of the past century, monetary policies and exchange rate policies were easier. Most currencies were fixed in value to gold, or were fixed in value to other currencies that were in turn fixed to gold. Governments adjusted their money supplies to maintain these fixed values. That basic system, with some warts and scars, ruled the world economy from 1870 to 1970. It broke down only temporarily during wars and the Great Depression. But since 1971 the major currencies have no longer been backed by gold. And since 1973 there has been no organized system to maintain their relative values. They have fluctuated freely according to supply and demand. The period between 1973 and 1986 is the longest peacetime experiment in fluctuating exchange rates in centuries, and the first in the era of worldwide interdependent economies.

When the system of gold and fixed exchange rates crumbled in the late 1960s, men of affairs mourned while many academic economists, led by Milton Friedman, looked forward to a free market in national currencies. These economists argued that speculators would keep exchange rates fairly stable and close to their "fundamental" values by buying currencies that got too low and selling those that got too high.

Recent events have not borne out this optimism. The floating exchange rate system has been plagued by large and unpredictable swings in the values of the major currencies. Ten years ago, in January 1976, a dollar bought 2.6 deutsche marks. Four years later it bought only 1.7. By January 1985 it was back up to 3.1. Now it's back down to 2.2. Similar swings have affected other currencies as well as the price of gold. From 1879 to 1933, an ounce of gold cost $20.54. At the bottom of the Depression, the dollar was devalued to $35 per ounce, where it remained fixed until August 1971. Since then, the price soared to $160 in 1974; fell to $125 in 1976, peaked at over $1,000 in 1980, and since has declined sharply to $340. The farm crisis and the international debt crisis owe much to a similar boom-and-bust cycle of prices in other commodities during the past 15 years.

Businessmen and financiers are dismayed. Huge currency fluctuations make it impossible to plan rationally for international trade. Whole industries in the United States were made unprofitable by the strong dollar during the first Reagan term, and millions of jobs in export sectors were lost. If the dollar continues to weaken, it will next be German and Japanese exporters that are seriously squeezed, if not eliminated. And wherever exports are squeezed, pressure grows for trade protectionism. The overvalued dollar has been the greatest threat to free trade in decades. The damage when the currency market swings against you far exceeds the benefits when it swings toward you. What the nations of the world need is neither overvalued nor undervalued currencies, but stable currencies.

Since floating exchange rates are a historical novelty, it is understandable that speculators have not performed their assigned task of stabilizing prices. The supposed "fundamental" values of the exchange rates and commodities prices depend heavily on government monetary and fiscal policies, and the direction of those policies often has been hard to fathom in the past 15 years. Far from aiming to stabilize exchange rates, the Carter and Reagan administrations have pursued a bewildering array of contradictory policies concerning the value of the dollar. At first the Reagan administration bragged about the strong dollar as a vote of confidence in Reaganomics by the world financial community. More recently, it has bragged of its success in talking down the dollar, in order to improve the U.S. trade position and forestall protectionism.

It is certainly possible to prevent large swings in exchange rates and commodities prices. But what's possible and what's desirable are two different things. The real problem is that we have come to demand a lot more from monetary policy than just stable exchange rates. We want our monetary system to help bring low unemployment, low interest rates, low inflation, and so on. Balancing these

Jeffrey Sachs is professor of economics at Harvard.

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goals is even more complicated because many governments must be involved in the decision process.

The easiest way to avoid big swings in exchange rates would be a common world currency. After all, we don't worry about the exchange rate between Louisiana dollars and Massachusetts dollars. A single large market with a common currency is central to America's economic might. Why not extend the same benefit to the whole world, or at least to the major industrial countries? Because governments treasure their right to issue their own currency. Last year, when a finance minister in Israel proposed using the dollar as Israel's currency, he was booted out of office in less than a day. More than national pride is involved. A government without its own currency can't pursue its own monetary policy. The same loss of freedom is involved, to a lesser extent, when a government decides to fix the exchange rate of its currency to another currency or to gold.

The main freedom that comes from having your own currency is the freedom to print it. By printing pieces of paper designated as money, governments are able to purchase goods and services that they do not, and perhaps dare not, pay for through explicit taxation. A $100 bill costs a fraction of a cent to print, but it buys a full $100 worth of goods. Since printing money is such a lucrative activity, governments monopolize it. Of course too much paper printing leads to high inflation and a falling exchange rate. A national currency also allows a government to use monetary policy to affect interest rates, prices, and employment.

Like a single world currency, any managed exchange rate system reduces each country's monetary freedom. When a country fixes its currency to gold, it must be ready to buy and sell gold at the official price. If it prints too much paper currency, it will run out of gold if it doesn't raise the price. Likewise, if a foreign government pegs its currency to the U.S. dollar, the government will run out of dollars if it prints too much currency of its own.

In an international exchange rate system, the participating countries must agree to rules. If they decide to fix the rates, they must also decide how to share the responsibility for monetary management. For Germany and the United States to have a fixed exchange rate, they must be expanding their money supplies at about the same rate. But who should set the rate?

THE CLASSICAL gold standard, in its heyday between 1879 and 1914, was the fixed exchange rate system par excellence. The coordination problem was largely avoided because each currency was pegged to an outside asset—gold. Exchange rates between currencies were fixed as a side effect of the fact that each of the currencies was fixed to gold. The gold standard effectively tied the money supplies in each country to the amount of gold in the world economy. In periods of major gold discoveries, money supplies soared and world prices rose. In periods of little gold discovery, world prices tended to fall.

The system had one great virtue: by limiting money supply increases to gold discoveries, the gold standard solved the problem of chronic inflation. Price increases in some periods balanced price declines in others. On the other hand, with money supplies tied to the vagaries of gold discoveries, inadequate gold discoveries caused intense economic hardship, such as the first "Great Depression" of 1873 to 1896. In the Great Depression of the 1930s, finance ministers learned that they could spur their economies to recovery by abandoning the restraints of the gold standard and expanding their money supplies.

The Bretton Woods system, designed largely by John Maynard Keynes, provided the monetary framework between 1946 and 1971. The hope was to build a system that was not as vulnerable to the vagaries of gold discoveries, or as inflexible in the face of mass unemployment. Price and exchange rate stability was no longer enough. After the torment of the 1930s, the public expected the monetary policymakers to focus at least as much on unemployment as on the more traditional aims of central bankers.

The resulting system was a hybrid. The United States undertook to fix the dollar at $35 per ounce of gold, while the rest of the world undertook to maintain their currencies at a fixed value to the dollar. Only in extreme circumstances, with international approval, could countries change their exchange rates. In effect, they could print more money if necessary to avoid high unemployment.

FOR THE U.S. promise to buy and sell gold at $35 per ounce to be credible, U.S. monetary policy had to be strongly linked to the country's gold supplies. But there was little taste for this kind of discipline. The tension was settled definitively during the Vietnam War. The United States simply printed too many dollars to be able to give an ounce of gold to anyone who showed up at Fort Knox with 35 of them. In 1971 President Nixon announced that the U.S. government would no longer honor its commitment to sell gold. This repudiation was far more important than any possible debt repudiation by a Latin American country today. The United States left the rest of the world holding a huge stock of rapidly depreciating dollars that all had assumed were as good as gold!

The other countries of the world had a choice. They could continue to peg their currencies to the dollar, and follow whatever monetary path the newly liberated United States chose to pursue. Or they could break with the dollar and pursue their own policies. The first approach was tried in the so-called Smithsonian Agreement of December 1971. That monetary savant Richard Nixon hailed it "the greatest monetary agreement in the history of the world." Almost immediately, the United States went on a spree, as Federal Reserve chairman Arthur Burns pumped up the economy in time for the 1972 election. The fixed exchange rate system automatically passed along this inflationary spree to all of the other currencies pegged to the dollar, thereby setting off the inflationary explosion of the 1970s. In March 1973 Germany, Switzerland, Japan, and others had had enough and chose to break loose. The floating rate system was born.

During the first Reagan term, the dollar rose by about half in relation to other currencies. The devastating effect on America's international competitiveness, more than any-

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thing else, has reawakened interest in some kind of return to fixed exchange rates. The trouble, as always, is that stable exchange rates require coordinated monetary policies. The main cause of the strong dollar was higher interest rates in the United States than abroad. Both Reagan's large budget deficits and Fed chairman Paul Volcker's tight monetary policies pushed up U.S. interest rates and thereby attracted investment capital from Europe and Japan. As foreign investors rushed to buy dollar assets, the value of the dollar rose.

IN SEPTEMBER 1985 the finance ministers of the "G-5" countries—the United States, Britain, France, Germany, and Japan—led by Treasury Secretary James Baker, called publicly for coordinated actions to bring down the dollar. They did not announce what specific actions they had in mind. Nevertheless, to the surprise of many observers, the dollar obliged by dropping about 15 percent against the other currencies over the next three months. U.S. interest rates fell compared to foreign interest rates, mainly because of a continuing easy money policy in the United States, and because of the expectation of budget cuts under the Gramm-Rudman law. But Germany and Japan resolutely rejected U.S. urging to help the process along by expanding their own budget deficits.

Policy coordination got two further boosts in 1986. First, the G-5 countries managed to reduce interest rates simultaneously after the oil price collapse, all assuming that the risk of renewed inflation was reduced. Then, at the Tokyo summit in May, the summiteers agreed to what they have sometimes called "enhanced surveillance" of exchange rates. This meant that the leading countries (now the "G-7," including Canada and Italy) agreed to scrutinize each other's policies more closely, using a series of "objective indicators," or key economic statistics. Basically, this just means that it is fair game for countries to complain in a more organized way about other countries' monetary policies. It does not mean a new set of rules for fixed exchange rates.

"Enhanced surveillance" may seem silly. But in fairness to Secretary Baker, the leading countries can only move slowly into a new and rigid arrangement. Politically, countries are far from ready to accept the international limitations necessary for real fixed rates. And the systems favored by various "experts" are generally vague and often deeply flawed.

Consider the problems the United States would have faced recently under a fixed exchange rate system. For the first half of 1986, U.S. economic growth has been much weaker than expected. Many economists and politicians (including the White House) are pushing for easier money and lower interest rates. But under a jointly managed fixed exchange rate with, say, Japan, the United States could not unilaterally lower interest rates since that would weaken the dollar relative to the yen. U.S. monetary policy would be stuck unless Japan agreed to a cut in its interest rates. If the Bank of Japan held firm, Volcker would have to march up to Congress to explain that "yes, high interest rates are causing rising unemployment in the United States, but Japan says that they have to stay that way."

Even if the countries could agree on ways to share the monetary responsibilities, the technical merits of alternative arrangements are still open to debate. Whatever Kemp's expectations, the gold standard is simply a nonstarter. Gold today has lost the mystique necessary to make grown men ignore unemployment, trade, and other pressing concerns in order to honor a commitment to fix its price. Also, gold production today is heavily concentrated in the Soviet Union and South Africa, not a lovely base for a reconstructed monetary system.

There are other proposals about. One is a fixed exchange rate system based on a monetarist-style fixed growth of supply in all currencies. Another is a system in which currency fluctuations are limited to "target zones." Still another would prevent wild swings in currency values by setting up regulatory barriers to capital flows between countries (to prevent "hot money" pulled by interest rate differentials from upsetting a given exchange rate target). But most proponents of these systems haven't grappled with the crucial question: which countries will have to bend to the will of the others when exchange rates start to move too far? Most advocates of target zones, the leading "practical" alternative to the current system, have systematically ducked that issue.

NEVERTHELESS, the leading countries are seriously intent on reducing the damage from highly volatile exchange rates. In judging the drama as it unfolds, viewers who give a [expletive deleted] should keep their eyes on the following issues:

First, is everyone on the same wavelength about how the world economy works? No other country is interested in sharing the same boat with a U.S. administration that denies the inflationary risks of high budget deficits, or the link between budget deficits and high interest rates. To Secretary Baker's credit, he has toned down the supply-side nonsense of the first Reagan term. But Germany and Japan are still nervous about joining their fates to a nation deeply immobilized by a fiscal crisis.

Second, is the United States prepared to give up much of its economic sovereignty? For much of this century, we could call the world's economic shots. Now economic power is more evenly spread, and the United States is being particularly weakened as it becomes a heavily indebted nation. Fixed exchange rates will require sharing the shots with others. Will we do it?

Third, are Japan and Germany ready to assume the responsibilities of economic leadership that their economic power now requires of them? Both now have the clout to have a major influence. (Indeed, Germany already sets the tone of monetary policy in Europe.) But with this power comes responsibility. As economic leader the United States has financed European postwar reconstruction, bankrolled the military defense of the alliance, engineered the continuing bailout of the heavily indebted Third World countries, and taken the lead in the current attempt at policy coordination.

The answers to these questions will determine the pace and success of international monetary reform. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

The Unquiet Man

Bernard Shaw said of Charles Dickens:

> Dickens was one of the greatest writers that ever lived—an astounding man . . . as ignorant of Art and Philosophy as a cave man. Compared to Goethe, he is almost a savage. Yet he is, by pure force of genius, one of the greatest writers of the world.

With a few adjustments—substituting Bergman, perhaps, for Goethe—the passage applies to John Ford and his place among film directors. But as soon as I say that, I worry: not about Ford's genius but about equating any director's career with careers in other arts. No director's life is unhampered, and that of an American director is more hampered than most. History is replete with pressures on artists—Molière and the Church, Thomas Hardy and his Victorian publishers, Dickens himself and magazine-serial structures, to name a very few. But for American directors, pressure is a constant; and among them Ford stands out because of the disparity between our conviction of his genius and the integrity of his "texts." To put him among the great directors of the world, as we must, is to see that the "pure force of genius" is relatively stronger in Ford than in Dickens because Ford had much less freedom of choice and much less control over the finished form of his work.

John Ford: The Man and His Films
by Tag Gallagher
(University of California Press, 572 pp., $35)

This hobbling of American directors, more grievous than in many other film cultures, has long been notorious. After the London premiere of *Touch of Evil* in 1958, Orson Welles (a Ford idolater) wrote a letter to the *New Statesman* stipulating that he had not previously known the film's title, that the film contained scenes he had neither written nor directed, and that the executive producer had done "wholesale re-editing." Ford was not always so frank. He told a French critic that he did his cutting himself, and he told an English interviewer: "I . . . cut in the camera. When I take a scene, I figure that's the only shot there is. Otherwise, if you give them a lot of film 'the committee' takes over after you leave the lot. . . . They can't do that with my pictures." This, according to many instances in Tag Gallagher's book, is simply false. For example, when Ford was at Fox, he often complained about Darryl Zanuck's interference; and complain though he did, he agreed to a sequence that Zanuck tacked on the end of *The Grapes of Wrath*. In *About John Ford*, Lindsay Anderson's loving but relatively clear-eyed book, Ford said in a 1973 interview: "When I'd finished a picture I could go off to Catalina on my boat and fish. . . . I could leave the editing to [Zanuck]." Gallagher says that in 1957 Ford went to England to direct two films without salary in order to "make films his own way." Yet as late as his next-to-last picture, Ford had to keep some footage he disliked and excise some that he liked, and he had to accept what he considered a "bad score."

These conditions, complicated by other interference, make certain kinds of close analysis slippery. Gallagher minutely dissects the editing of several Ford sequences, even comparing two of them with an instance of Mizoguchi's editing in *Sansho the Bailiff*. Certainly those sequences are acute, but Gallagher writes with a security based on inference and comparison, not ascertainable fact. He divides Ford's career into four periods (ages, he calls them)—Introspection, Idealism, Myth, and Mortality—and treats the director as if those periods had been as self-determined as those of a poet or painter. So far as I can see, Ford was hardly ever the sole master of his fate, unswayed by studio policy.

Yet my initial worry about comparing Ford to other kinds of artists, a worry exacerbated by Gallagher's lack of worry on the subject, is ultimately calmed by Ford himself. The obstacles were always there; but the recognizable touches and the thematic consonances emerge, the sum of qualities that give a Ford film an ease on the screen like that of an animal—cozy or fierce, depending on the story, in its habitat. The magnificent pictures that we see, the movements within them, the intensity of character even when the character is not complex, the nuances of small and large action, all these are Ford; and for all the interference, enough of the editing has inner consistencies to make opinions possible (if not Gallagher's frame by frame assurance).

It's important, I think, to underscore the hindrances in Ford's working life as I've done, because imperial loftiness about an American director's life ought to be dissipated and because paradoxically the hindrances in this case help to exalt the achievements. The power of Ford burns through, a power that makes us a part of lives far from our own and makes our own lives more vivid, power over daydream and memory. All of us have Ford moments tucked away in our heads. (Three of mine: the opening shot of *The Grapes of Wrath*; John Wayne in *The Searchers* riding toward us alone, then discovering that he is accompanied by a

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Heartburn. Air pudding, made from Nora Ephron's novel. But Meryl Streep is always worth seeing, and Mike Nichols is at his best with meringue. Comedy-drama about marriage between a New York food writer and a Washington columnist—and their troubles. (Reviewed 7/28/86)

A Room with a View. E. M. Forster replicated on the screen with a good eye, a good sense of Edwardian England, and (except for the Lucy) an excellent cast. (3/24/86)

Tea in the Harem. A new writer-director, Mehdi Charef, does well with this account of North African adolescents in Paris. Their troubles are familiar; the rendering is exceptional. (6/16/86)

Vagabond. Agnès Varda's best work, written and directed with rigor and respect. Sandrine Bonnaire, 18 when she played the lead, wanders the roads of southern France until her accidental death seals her mystery. Profoundly disturbing. (6/2/86)

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file of mounted Indians on either side; Donald Crisp pinned under a beam in the mine disaster of *How Green Was My Valley*, his desperate small son trying to free him while the dying man says weakly, "There's a good old man you are.")

This Ford, the Ford triumphant over Hollywood impediments, has affected filmmaking around the world; in that regard, only Griffith is his peer. Eisenstein said in 1945: "Of all American films made up to now [*Young Mr. Lincoln*] is the film I would wish, most of all, to have made." Ford's admirers include both expected and unexpected names, among them Akira Kurosawa and Jean-Marie Straub, Howard Hawks and Satyajit Ray, Samuel Fuller and Mark Donskoi.

ALL LIVES have oddities and contradictions, but Ford's life (1894-1973) has more than most. He was born in Maine, the son of Irish immigrants named Feeney, always thought of himself as Irish, sometimes said he had been born in Galway, and continually "channeled funds" to the IRA. He had only a high school education but was an incessant reader and sometimes went to literary sources for his films. (Eugene O'Neill said that *The Long Voyage Home* was the best film made from his work. Ford's film of *The Grapes of Wrath* is today much more compelling than Steinbeck's novel.) He got his start in pictures in 1914 through his older brother Francis, who had already become a director and actor by 1913; after their relative statures changed, the two men quarreled a lot, but John employed Francis in many small roles. John had a "pathological attitude" toward his brother, said acquaintances.

Ford is known as a maker of Westerns—in part because he once identified himself as such—yet only about half of his 100-plus features are Westerns; between 1926 (*3 Bad Men*) and 1939 (*Stagecoach*), he made 34 films, none of which was a Western. The very mention of Ford's Westerns evokes vistas of great space, yet two of the best, *My Darling Clementine* and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, take place mostly in towns. He was not a personal-publicity hound, yet he appeared in another director's film as himself (*Big Time*), and he was portrayed by an actor, thinly disguised, in a film of his own (*The Wings of Eagles*). In the late 1920s he was captivated by the work of F. W. Murnau and even visited Murnau

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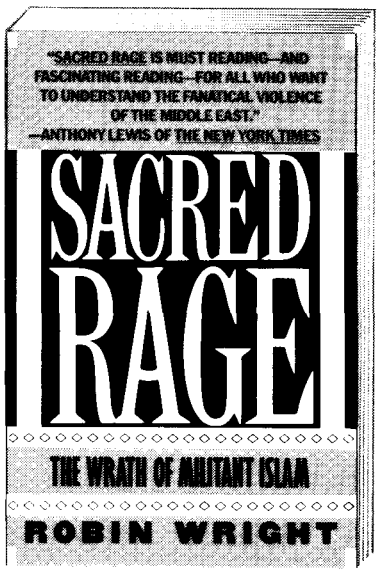
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in Berlin; yet the man who had the delicacy to respond to Murnau is the same man who later punched Henry Fonda across a room in a quarrel over *Mister Roberts*. (Ford did not finish the picture.) His military and naval films seem like superpatriotic billboards, and his last public utterance, at a televised banquet a few months before his death, was "God bless Richard Nixon"; yet through most of his life he was a staunch liberal and differed sharply with the rightism of such close associates as John Wayne and Ward Bond. Many of Ford's films treat Indians as pulp-fiction Redskins, treat blacks patronizingly (Stepin Fetchit is in some early 1930s pictures), treat women as décor in the lives of men; yet three of his last films were serious stories about Indians (*Cheyenne Autumn*), blacks (*Sergeant Rutledge*), and women (*7 Women*). (When he was about to start *Cheyenne Autumn*, he told Anderson: "I've killed more Indians in my career than any other director, so I felt it was only right now I should tell *their* story.") And through much of his life, while he was directing actors with a subtlety that amazed many of them, while he was creating treasuries for the world's eye, he was also doing a large amount of brawling like a saloon roughneck.

HE DISLIKED arty talk about himself. Peter Bogdanovich asked him in 1968 at what point in his career he had begun to feel he was doing "something important." Ford replied:

> Well, that's a presumption I can't accept. I never felt that way about it. I've always enjoyed making pictures. . . . I like to be on the set and, regardless of what the story is, I like to work in pictures, it's fun. . . . I always had an eye for composition . . . and that's all I *did* have. As a kid, I thought I was going to be an artist; I used to sketch and paint a great deal. . . . [Several art critics have shown relations between Ford's films and the art of Remington, Russell, and Mount.] But I have never thought about what I was doing in terms of art. . . . To me, it was always a job of work—which I enjoyed immensely—and that's it.

Two points stand out. The fact that he had not become what in his youth he considered "an artist" may have seemed a defection, a lesser choice in which he could at least use his gift for composition and have fun. And he got that fun from making films *regardless of the story*. Any one working day's good use of the film medium's components, he implies, set the bounds of his intent and fulfillment. To get some movements or lines right, to perfect a composition, was the most he anticipated in a field so expensive that financiers were always nagging.

This modest, practical satisfaction is fodder for the auteur critics. The auteur imperative, especially in dealing with American directors, is to find the virtuosity within studio-constricted work. But if we applied this method to other arts, seeking only virtuosity, Swinburne would be a great poet and Rimsky-Korsakov a great composer. The non-auteur film critic looks for the director's virtuosity realizing a whole work. Evidence, much of it supplied by Gallagher, shows that Ford's remark about disregarding the story is in proof more cavalier than factual; as far as studio chiefs would permit, he constantly fussed about his material. Whole works are what he was after, and though his artistry is visible in almost all his films, the best of them (e.g., *The Searchers*, *The Grapes of Wrath*) come close to that wholeness. In some of the others, he fulfills the questionable script so beautifully that it grows from a vehicle for his virtuosity to intrinsic importance. The story of *Stagecoach* is just one more "journey" tale with such superficial variations on stock characters as the whore who turns out to have a heart of gold and the escaped con who is really a good man. We might laugh at the screenplay. We cannot laugh at the film.

GALLAGHER'S book is the biggest and most thorough so far on Ford and is the source of most of the biographical data above. Gallagher, who teaches at Babson College, has his own technique for dealing with the abrasive conditions of Ford's working life; he details them, then he usually ignores them. To lift himself over the bumps, he rhapsodizes, almost unwaveringly, from beginning to end. He brings to his book scrupulous research that tells us as much about Ford's life as we could want to know; but he hasn't brought a great deal more. Three failings stand out. He luxuriates in the old film-criticism ploy of elevation by name-dropping. His writing puffs and asserts and is sometimes silly. His analyses are more fervent than convincing.

On the first point, Gallagher manages in the course of his book to connect Ford with Sophocles, St. Augustine, Mozart, and Beethoven, along with many others. This does little for his credibility and, momentarily at least, it may embarrass us for admiring Ford.

Here are a few samples of Gallagher's writing:

> It is improbable, however, that the sensitivity in Jack's blue eyes was noticeable to many in the teens and twenties.
>
> Leaves, breeze, and flickering light mirror moods Antonioni-ishly.
>
> *3 Godfathers* tends to be a minor movie. . . . ["Tends to be" is a Gallagher tic.]
>
> A condescending veneer of euphoric populism has replaced the uncomplicated gaze with which Ford previously viewed simple folk.

And speaking of Ford's wartime documentary *The Battle of Midway*: "The concision of its 17 minutes never demands concession to amplitude."

Comment on the text must also include the photographs because they are so numerous and so well-integrated. They illustrate specific points almost page by page and, fascinatingly, they disclose the early development of Ford's visual distinction. See the still from *Mother Machree* (1928). And see the stills from *Pilgrimage* (1933) to learn that the famous "Ford shot"—looking out from darkness into brightness beyond—did not begin with the opening of *The Searchers*. (A few errors. A still that is supposedly from *Three Jumps Ahead* must be from another picture; the man identified is Harry Carey, not Tom Mix. In a group shot of Ford's yacht club, there's a pointless query after Preston Foster's name—it's Foster, all right—and Frank Morgan is called George Cleveland.) The 46-page filmography is part of the text, too, a valuable part. But it teases on one matter. Gallagher lists William Faulkner as uncredited collaborator on the scripts of *Flesh*, *Four Men and a Prayer*, *Submarine Patrol*, and *Drums Along the Mohawk*, but nowhere in the body of the book is there any mention of this striking fact or of any encounter between director and writer.

LAST, there is Gallagher's criticism. One reward of his intense study is that he can survey, as from a height, the themes and patterns that wind through the long stream of Ford's work. For instance, he notes that *Steamboat Round the Bend* includes a type of fool—usually played by Francis Ford—who appears in 11 subsequent films. Apropos of the buttercup scene in *The Quiet Man*, Gallagher notes that flower symbols figure prominently in more than 20 Ford films.

But in general his criticism is deplorable. This opinion doesn't come from

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disagreement with Gallagher about those Ford films that I remember, though I certainly do disagree most of the time. The troubles are that his hyperboles intrude, his flat pronouncements are vulnerable, and his theoretical exegesis is both thick and thin.

A sample of hyperbole: he writes of *7 Women*, "Each moment confronts us with unequaled virtuosity and unsurpassed depths of humanism." We needn't join Lindsay Anderson (though I do) in thinking that *7 Women* is "old-fashioned melodramatics ... given a somewhat specious gloss by the introduction of psychological, not to say Freudian themes" in order to find Gallagher's statement a touch grandiloquent. A sample of his pronouncements: he writes of *Steamboat Round the Bend*, "As Duke says (and as all John Ford movies say), 'There ain't nothin' nicer than goin' up and down the river.'" All Ford movies? *The Informer*? *The Lost Patrol*? *The Prisoner of Shark Island*?

Gallagher's theorizing "tends to be" windy. At one point he summarizes Ford's stylistics, then says they "became what, for convenience, we label Ford's 'expressionism.'" He justifies this convenience as follows:

> The term may be confusing, as it implies kinship to the brutal Expressionist (big *E*) movement that arose paroxysmally out of German anxiety following World War I. The advent of the German artfilm had indeed been heralded by *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* in 1919, but this single movie's few Expressionist roots were immediately abandoned by its successors. ["Few Expressionist roots"? What else but Expressionism is there in *Caligari*? And was the style "immediately abandoned"? What about Pabst's *Secrets of a Soul* (1926), among other German films of the decade?] Nonetheless "expressionism" (small *e*) has survived to designate all in cinema that is not realist [so much for symbolism and naturalism]; expressionism is concerned with the subjective or poetic aspect of things [Subjectivity equals poetry?], and is virtually equivalent to "style". . . . "Reality," on the other hand, is by definition meaningless and emotionless; thus filmic realism is, in theory, styleless.

Whose definition of reality is that? The same authority, I assume, who equated it with realism. But this house-of-cards rationale gives Gallagher what, for some reason, he hotly desires: license to call Ford a small-*e* expressionist simply because he has a style.

Inevitably, this license leads Gallagher into some tight corners, but he tries to wriggle out. On *The Quiet Man*: "Ford is still an expressionist, and in *The Quiet Man* emotions are not merely represented but articulated." What does that distinction mean? Pantomime as against drama with dialogue? On *Donovan's Reef*: "What was once expressionism has evolved into a purer sort of classicism . . ." Or into Humpty Dumpty Land, where words mean what Gallagher chooses to make them mean.

I won't explore his comments on acting style; they seem to me only sophomoric obeisance to a topic he felt obliged to discuss. But I can't ignore his usage of the words "Brecht" and "Brechtian." He calls *The Quiet Man* Brechtian merely because it shows us people of differing social strata and occupations. He quotes a remark by Jean-Marie Straub that Ford is the most Brechtian of all filmmakers (an ostentatious perversity if I ever heard one), then gullibly footnotes the remark:

> . . . [Straub] was referring not so much to Ford's *acting style*—in that sense *no* films are truly Brechtian—as to Ford's manner of stripping naked social ideologies that are elsewhere unacknowledged.

No Brechtian acting style in films? What about early Godard? Or *How I Won the War*? Or much of Syberberg? And what in the world are the ideologies stripped naked in Ford that no other director has acknowledged? "One might call Ford Brechtian because every element in his cinema is engaged dialectically with every other element . . ." Thus Gallagher continues his footnote, calling this comment "essentially the thesis of this book." But is there a good film in which the elements are not engaged dialectically with one another? Does that engagement make Hitchcock, Ozu, Clair, and a few dozen others Brechtian?

Gallagher then quotes Brecht's familiar two-column table distinguishing between Dramatic Theater and Epic Theater and concludes that Ford is "very much on the 'epic' side. . . ." Read that remark and remember how Brecht worked against direct emotional appeal (he even rewrote parts of *Mother Courage* to make the protagonist less sympathetic); remember Ford's masterly ability to summon torrents of deep feeling in us, and also remember his blatant grabs at emotion, like tears blinked back by old soldiers, flag wavings, saccharine music; and you feel that terminology has fallen into a Waring blender. Certainly there are dark strains in Ford, often covered by bunting and genre tradition. (Robin

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Wood says that Westerns gave Ford the best outlet for these strains: "Only in a Western . . . could the archetypal American hero be revealed as psychotic, as fundamentally and irreparably split and damaged.") But there's a far distance between those contrapuntal strains, especially since they are generally devoid of irony, and the Brechtian mode.

In my view the essential thesis of this book is not what Gallagher says it is: it's to show that he is more perceptive than previous celebrants of Ford—a customary reason for additional criticism on any subject, though sometimes more justified—and to prove that Ford is more profound than he is often still said to be. But Ford is too strong to be thus exculpated and extolled. By the pure force of genius that Shaw ascribed to Dickens, Ford rolls right over these febrile apologetics. (For a while, a small school of literary critics felt they needed to prove that Dickens was an existentialist, not a melodramatist.) Gallagher seems to have appointed himself Ford's lawyer before the Celestial Throne on Judgment Day. The lawyer's arguments overheat badly; but his client wins anyway, through force of genius.

How AIDS is changing the way gays think and act.

LIFE AFTER DEATH

BY SEYMOUR KLEINBERG

THESE days the morale of the gay community ranges from cloudy optimism to crystal-clear despair, depending on whom you talk to. I've been talking to gay activists, journalists, academics, therapists and medical doctors, businessmen, poets and painters, working-class men, and men who don't work, either because they don't need to or because they can't find a job. Some are Marxists, some lesbian feminists, and some have no politics but sexual politics. The term "gay community" refers partly to a discernible group of homosexual men and lesbians in major urban centers, and partly to a political idea. The media made it a term to reckon with long before anyone could say what it was. In 1969, "gay community" was largely a political idea and a myth. Even then there was a community in the simplest sense of the word, but what it looked like, as in the case of the blind men identifying the elephant, depended on what you touched.

Seventeen years later, there are listings in the Yellow Pages. Coherent and representative groups have emerged, particularly in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York. They differ enough to be unable to provide a national leadership, and persistent closetry makes estimates of their numbers and their members rough at best, but a gay man or woman would likely feel at home in any of those three cities. The real differences are geographical, not political or social, and there is no single lifestyle or even a dominant one. The promiscuous one that became the hallmark of urban gay life in the early '70s—newsworthy because it was commercial and outrageous, and because it gradually became the self-defining image of so many gay men—no longer prevails as it once did.

"Frontline:
AIDS: A National Inquiry"
produced by Michael Kirk
directed by Christopher Arther
PBS

An Early Frost
teleplay by Ron Cowen and Daniel Lipman
story by Sherman Yellen
directed by John Erman
NBC

As Is
by William M. Hoffman
(Random House, 97 pp., $10.95, $3.95 paper)

The Normal Heart
by Larry Kramer
(New American Library, 128 pp., $12.95, $6.95 paper)

Today the general mood is grim. Everyone is either melancholy or anxious, afraid not only of getting AIDS but of the growing signs of hostility toward gay men and women. It is chilling when the *New York Times*, purportedly in the interests of balanced journalism, publishes William F. Buckley in support of tatooing homosexual men and i.v. users, while the word "quarantine" quivers between the lines of the op-ed page. (I naively waited for letters of protest from both the Jewish and gay communities. Wouldn't Jews be disgusted by the parodic horror of the suggestion?) Though Buckley is absurd, the fears he touches on are not.

Helplessness about AIDS and uncertainty about the social future are exacerbated for gay men and women by their memories of the past. This is one reason so many are eager to be involved with gay organizations, to be tangibly connected to a real, not an ideological, community. To be passive again is to stress one's helplessness, to be waiting for the next blow and wondering if the humiliation will be bearable.

The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAD) is among the newest organizations to appear after years of political apathy in the gay community. It arose to protest the *New York Post*'s homophobic coverage of the AIDS crisis. Voting into law the New York City gay rights bill—which will probably foster sexual moderation by lessening the sense of injustice and deprivation that made bravura promiscuity so politically and socially charged—became the rallying issue. But the passage of the bill created less euphoria than one might expect. To many, the victory marked the end of 15 years of struggle for civil liberties, the last and very late achievement of the political movement that began in the early 1970s in the city with the largest homosexual population in the world. Now local organizations like GLAD, and even larger groups like the National Gay Task Force, all have similar agendas. They are in defensive positions; most of their activism is of the watchdog variety. This may resemble politics and even suggest a repoliticization of the gay community, but it is a politics without a future. It is, rather, a necessary gesture that may help balance out both the secular and religious exploiters of the AIDS crisis.

The recent Supreme Court decision regarding sodomy laws is an enormous insult to a community in crisis and confirms how deeply irrational the antipathy

Seymour Kleinberg is the author of *Alienated Affections: Being Gay in America* (Warner Books) and teaches at the Brooklyn Center of Long Island University.

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toward homosexuality can be. It may also seem to the gay community that this necessitates renewed political struggle in the usual sense of protest and confrontation. The Court's decision obviously does mean that more energy must yet again be expended on fighting the same issues, only to maintain the status quo, and the expenditure of this energy comes at a moment when it is dearly needed elsewhere. While it is enraging or depressing for gay men and women to face the blatancy of their second-class status in America, it cannot come as a surprise to any one of them. This is not the time for nursing bitterness about the callousness of mainstream society.

The Court's decision need not be viewed as a portent of the future as much as a symptom of the past. The *New York Times*, never an ally to gay causes, calls the ruling "gratuitous and petty . . . an offense to American society's maturing standards of individual dignity." This is the voice of establishment, not liberal, America. The Court's ruling forces a response—from radical right to left—that is ultimately bound to aid gay men and women. It will be a call to conscience that will override the bias that has kept so much of society aloof from the fate of the gay community. And if it doesn't, if the Court's ruling is truly portentous, then far more than the gay community will suffer, although it will suffer first.

But most of society now is less concerned with who is responsible for the AIDS epidemic than with the issue of how gay men are going to behave in order to inhibit its spread. That issue, it should be said at once, arose in the gay community almost as soon as it was clear that AIDS was regarded as a gay disease. The closing of the bathhouses in San Francisco and New York was the occasion for raising the question in public. Publicly and privately it was admitted that the issue of accountability and social responsibility would have to be addressed. Obviously, this meant altering sexual behavior and style of life. Efforts were made in every large city with a gay community to inform and educate gay men about "safe sex," hoping that would be enough to halt the growth of AIDS. It is not yet clear how much deprivation this entails, or how successful the educational campaign has been. History does not offer much ground for optimism; venereal epidemics of the past ended not with altered sexual behavior, but with the discovery of penicillin.

But another issue, internal and not yet explored in any public way, has now arisen and needs attention, an issue that the symptoms of the crisis sometimes hint at: what does it mean to be homosexual in the modern world? This question is not about grievances and injustices, and it cannot be answered on the barricades, especially the barricade of rhetoric. As long as the subject of gay identity is argued in terms of whether it is good or bad, legitimate or illegitimate, there is no energy left to address the question of what it is. The new activism cannot address the more important internal questions the crisis has raised. The sources of change are elsewhere, in behavior and in thought about the homosexual condition that most men and women are reluctant to embrace.

The view of homosexuals in the media is a good example of social ambivalence. The *New York Times* alone provides a casebook of conflicting attitudes. Network television is even less able to separate journalism from moralism, or sensationalism from both. On the one hand,

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viewers were offered a drama about AIDS, *An Early Frost*, which was as good public relations as the gay community could ask for. On the other hand, "Frontline," a PBS program noted for its sobriety, aired a dubious documentary, "AIDS: A National Inquiry," that could have been commissioned by Jerry Falwell or Anita Bryant. A crew of cameramen followed Fabian Bridges after he was diagnosed with AIDS and photographed him hustling men. The crew paid him $15 a day, enough for a bed in a flophouse or bathhouse, but not enough to keep him off the streets.

The film is so exploitative and sensational it is hard to appreciate its merits. Bridges, deracinated either by illness or by his personality prior to treatment, is pathetic and repellently irresponsible. Young, black, abandoned by his family, paid to leave town by the Houston police, he is failed by every social agency he encounters. Not until local gay leaders are called in to house him, and to shield him from the press, does he get the help that keeps him off the streets. The film ends with a shot of his pauper's grave. Although it is obvious that Bridges is an exceptional case, he is treated as if he were representative.

In contrast, *An Early Frost* is slick and sentimental. No one in it is even vaguely unsympathetic. The dying hero, who has been living monogamously with his lover for years, is sensitively handsome, like Montgomery Clift but less neurotic. (True, he dotes on his mother a bit, but she's so glamorous, understanding, brave, and *good*, she deserves it.) The play is really about burying the children, about coming home to die. The drama is provided not by AIDS, but by the hero's coming out to his parents, and the father's inability to accept the fact that his son is already lost to him. Coming out is good dramatic material; AIDS, however, is not. Besides being so lugubrious, it is horrible. Unlike tuberculosis with its reputation for erotic magnetism, AIDS, like cancer, is a disfiguring, wasting disease.

THERE HAVE also been two plays on the subject of AIDS that have had some theatrical success. Both fail as dramas. *As Is* and *The Normal Heart* pretend to confront the crisis, but AIDS becomes the occasion for a domestic romance in one case and a puritanical diatribe in the other. Like *An Early Frost*, these plays stumble upon the real issue now at stake for gays—the question of who they are. *As Is* is the least distorted by sentiment because the hero, Rich, is so difficult. Self-centered and demanding, he would try the patience of a saint, whom William Hoffman provides him with in Saul, the epitome of loving loyalty. Unlike the hero of *An Early Frost*, who seems gratuitously struck down, Rich has been careening down the fast lane for years. The play ends with Rich and Saul making love in the hospital bed, curtains drawn (presumably they are practicing safe sex). *As Is* is not about Rich or Saul, who are credible enough as types—rather like the men in *Boys in the Band* 20 years ago. The drama of the play consists in "breaking the news" to the world and dealing with its horrified response. Hoffman is talented enough to add a little emotional manipulation to contemporary polemics without letting the audience feel had. But reality is much more painful than these writers have the power to suggest.

Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart* strives hard to be powerful. It is blatantly manipulative and stridently contentious. There is a great deal of shouting, towering rages in fact, but in the end I felt bullied, not moved. The death of the handsome, witty, intelligent, loving young man who has so much to live for is a variation on *An Early Frost*, but he is not the center of the play, partly because he is anything but believable; rather, it is his healthy lover, Ned, who plays the principal role. Where Hoffman's Rich is somewhat unpleasant and sarcastic, Kramer's Ned is appalling and violent.

THE NORMAL HEART, however full of righteousness, raises some key questions. Unfortunately, it answers all of them in very simplistic terms. There are many villains in the piece: the *New York Times*, Mayor Koch, everyone connected with AIDS in Washington and Atlanta. But the villains onstage are all cowardly homosexuals who refuse to confront the forces of indifference, as well as the homosexuals who are somehow responsible for the epidemic because of their lifestyle, their pursuit of pleasure rather than love. Though the play bravely confronts the issue of promiscuity, it fails to probe its role in the changing self-conception of gays in any but the most schematic way. The love that the play advocates is not only romantic and monogamous, it is conventional married love, blessed by higher authorities. The play ends with Ned "marrying" his lover moments before he dies, in a ceremony attended by family and presided over by the physician in charge, the one woman in the play, who has repeatedly and sarcastically said that gay men must stop having sex, entirely, period. That is her idea of containing the epidemic.

Still, *The Normal Heart* does inadvertently bring to the surface the anxiety gay men feel, not about being at risk, but about being homosexual. In fact, the play is best when it is about being homosexual rather than about being sick or being responsible. Ned is depressed before he is enraged. AIDS gives him a cathartic moment to vent all the grievance and frustration he has felt, disenfranchised in his native land. The play doesn't ask: why am I dying of AIDS? But it does ask: why have I been chosen by that same random Nature to suffer outsidedness when, like every man in America, I was told I was born to privilege?

II.

The modest commercial success but large artistic failure of the plays about AIDS says something about the response of audiences to the crisis. It is a bit ironic that gay men as a group are noted for their acerbic wit, their radical and impeccable taste, their critical sensibility, yet the plays have succeeded because they are sentimental and full of bathos. The gratifications of pity and self-pity have overridden any thoughts of literary merit.

To feel sentimental, to cherish what is unworthy of serious attention, is not a moral failure. But it is a symptom of moral evasiveness. *The Norman Heart* may provoke tears amid its storms of weeping and rages; but it does not provoke, it does not intend to provoke, thinking. It isn't that the griefs, or the shallow arguments about responsibility for AIDS, are too painful to witness. Rather, the subject of sexual behavior as the foundation for social identity—a foundation that has left so many imperiled—raises acute anxieties. Distraction, obviously, is more comforting than intellectual appraisal.

The effort to assess the meaning of one's sexuality—anyone's sexuality—has rarely been characterized by clear thinking or frank self-examination. Arguments and accusations about moral responsibility certainly don't help matters. Such confrontations are, rather, an invitation to defiance, rationalization, and rhetoric. Yet the time for such an assess-

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rhetoric. Yet the time for such an assessment is upon gays, literally as a matter of life and death.

Some gay men have been changing, in both unexpected and predictable ways. Former activists are now middle-aged and more prosperous than ever before in their lives. They have steady partners and more settled domestic lives. Even the majority who are single have found that the age-ism of gay culture has altered their sexual lives as much as AIDS has. Surprisingly, I find those for whom the caloric value of every mouthful of food was instantly tabulated, who were tanned all year round at the playgrounds of the Caribbean or Long Island, who never missed a day at the gym—they are the men who are putting on weight, and spending time on fund-raising, or working at the Gay Men's Health Clinic or elsewhere. One does not have to be political, or even to read with any regularity, to be civic-minded.

SOME HAVE refused to change; they search for safe places to practice old pleasures. Latin America and the Caribbean have long accommodated homosexual men with their informal bordellos, their "muchachos" who are partners to passive men but who do not think of themselves as homosexual. It is only a question of time before these gay men spread AIDS to other islands near Haiti, from which they probably first brought it to the mainland. It is hard to gauge the state of mind of such men. They may be filled with rage and seeking revenge. They may fatalistically believe that their behavior doesn't matter. They don't feel they are doing anything wrong, or they don't care. They have no moral sense, or they are immoral. It's bad enough to live in dread of dying an awful premature death. Yet to be filled with desire for revenge, or to be without desires at all, even for ordinary dignity, is a terrible way to live or die. I assume that such men act less from conscious indecency than from pure evasion. To emphasize sexual desire and desirability is a very effective way to mask anxiety. The habit of promiscuity doesn't allow much room for introspection.

Promiscuity is a broad term. For some men, it means serial affairs or brief erotic relationships. For others, there are no relationships at all; sexual encounters begin and end with momentary arousal. And for some men, promiscuity is all of these—having a lover, and having someone else, and having anyone else. Promiscuity is time consuming and repetitious. Still, it also has another history and meaning for gay men; and it is that history, and that meaning, with which gay men in the shadow of AIDS must grapple.

In the last 15 years or so, until AIDS appeared, promiscuity had been a rich if not invaluable experience for gay men, uniting a sense of liberation with a politics of resentment, a feeling of living at the modern edge with an outlet for aggressions created by long-held grievances. Such a combination is explosive, of course, and anti-intellectual. But gay men did not invent sexual liberation. They merely stamped it with their hallmark of aggressive display. Casual sex, freed from commercialism, seemed a glamorous portent of a society free from sexism. After "Stonewall," the riot at a New York bar in which gay men successfully resisted police arrest and inadvertently inaugurated gay liberation, gay activists felt they were going to redefine the old terms, junk the guilt and the remorse. They were already discarding with contempt the shrinks and the moralists, paying some of them back for the years of misery they had helped to create, the self-dislike they had urged gays to internalize for the sake of what now seemed merely propriety. Out the window went "sick" and "bad." Many could hardly believe they were jettisoning that dismal baggage.

THOSE YEARS of sexual opportunism were a time of indifference to psychological inquiry. Description was a higher priority. After so much silence, the need to explain, and the desire to shock, were first on the agenda of gay writers and intellectuals, while the majority of gay men were exploring an exhilarating sense of relief in discos, bars with back rooms, and the baths. The politics of that eroticism had as much to do with ego as with eros: gay men said that sexuality did not diminish social status, to say nothing of intellectual or professional stature—no matter how vividly it was practiced.

In the early '70s, when movement politics was at the zenith of its popularity, the values it promoted were very seductive. It said the old romantic pieties were a slavish imitation of straight society, where they were already undergoing vigorous scrutiny from feminists. If women and blacks could use politics to demand that society acknowledge they had been unjustly treated, why not gay men? If the acknowledgment of that in-

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ERRATUM: In an ad for *National Review* placed in *The New Republic* (June 30), there was an erroneous statement concerning the Yugo, the subcompact car newly imported from Yugoslavia. The ad reported that "CBS interviewed one Yugo owner who recalled the car filling with blue smoke. He turned off the ignition, but the motor kept running and the smoke billowing until his wife, with sure intuition, switched off the lights." In fact, the car in question was not the Yugo but the Dacia, which is imported to Canada (not yet to the United States) from Rumania, not Yugoslavia.

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old laws and replacing them with better ones, then that, obviously, was the agenda. But for the most part, neither the victories nor the defeats changed the daily lives of gay men and women very much. With or without sodomy laws, most lived without concern for legality. It was understood that the principal struggle was psychological, a demand first for recognition, then for acceptance; the bold terms in which that demand was couched guaranteed the right to pursue a sexual lifestyle of their own choosing. After Stonewall, gays chose to be very visible.

BEFORE Stonewall, promiscuous sex was illegal, but it was no particular threat to health. If the heart and heat of gay politics has been to ensure the right to fuck who, when, and where one pleases, then the consequences now for the movement have a rough poetic justice. The more that sex dominated the style of life, from discos to parades, with rights secured or not, the less need most men felt they had for politics—and the less others, such as lesbians, feminists, and minorities, felt the gay movement offered them. For gay men sexual politics became something oddly literal. Both before and after the movement, promiscuity was honored as the sign of an individual's aggressiveness (no matter how passive he was in bed). To fuck was to defy, as bad girls of the past did, dismantling some of society's dearest notions about virtue. But most homosexuals want to be conventional. They are no more imaginative, courageous, or innovative than their neighbors. They want a good life on the easiest terms they can get. Many regard as uninteresting the activism that a handful of men and women are devoted to.

By the late '70s, movement politics displaced flamboyant effeminacy. The piece of trade (a man who is fellated by another but pretends to be heterosexual), whose very stance of masculinity ensured his contempt for his homosexual partner, had been replaced by that formerly groveling queen himself, now looking more virile than his proletarian idol. The dominant image of rebellion was no longer the defiant queens with their merciless ironies but powerful, strong bodies modeled on working-class youth. This new image exposed the erotic ideal of gay male life more clearly and responsively than anything since classical Greece. It was a vast improvement. Liberation freed gays from a lot of burdens, and one of the biggest was to end the search for masculinity among the enemy.

But paralleling the rise of the macho body has been the decline of the health of the male community—a nasty coincidence, if you believe in coincidence. The deeper truth, however, is that the very values that motivated us to look strong rather than be strong are the same values that elevated promiscuity as the foundation of a social identity. AIDS is mobilizing many to work in agencies caring for the ill, allowing them opportunities for sympathy and generosity—but that, too, is not the basis of an identity. What is killing you is not likely to give you a sense of self.

Even if AIDS were cured tomorrow, the style and identity of gay life in the '70s and '80s will be as dated as the sexual mores of closeted homosexual life are now. Many men may rush back to the baths, but it can no longer be the liberating experience it was. AIDS has nullified promiscuity as politically or even psychologically useful. AIDS has replaced one set of meanings with another. It has now become mythic as the dark side of sexuality, Thanatos to Eros. The life force that is the sexual drive has always had its counterpart, and AIDS is the most dramatic juxtaposition of the need for another and the fear of the other, of pain and pleasure, of life and death, in modern medical history. From the ancient Greeks on down, without a moment's interruption, the lesson has been the same: unfettered sexuality means death, whether through dishonor, the wrath of the gods, or nature itself. We are the heirs of those legends. AIDS, like a blotter, has absorbed those old meanings.

THERE IS much, then, that gay men must give up. The loss of sexual life, nearly as much as grief and fear, compounds deprivations, and no amount of civic work or marching to banners of Gay Pride compensates for it. The most dramatic changes have occurred among those large numbers of men who have become abstinent, assuming a sense of responsibility to themselves if not to others. Not only must gay men refrain from what alone gave them a powerful enough identity to make a mark on the consciousness of society, a behavior that replaced society's contempt with the much more respectable fear and anger, but they must cease to think of themselves as unloved children. And they must do both before they have evidence that society accepts them or that their own behavior has meaning for each other more nurturing than it has been. It is very hard to give up a sense of deprivation when little that created it has disappeared, and worse, when one is beset with fear.

One thing, however, is clear: gay men are not acting in concert. If gay men sensed they belonged to a recognized community, instead of struggling still to assert their legitimacy, the task would be simpler. If they felt the larger society was no longer so adamantly adversarial, they could give up the sense of injustice that makes talk of social responsibility seem hypocritical. And if their own experience with each other had provided them with bonds deeper than momentary pleasure, they could trust themselves to act as a group in which members assumed responsibility for each other.

As long as the larger society continues to prefer the old homosexual invisibility, the nice couple next door to whom anyone can condescend, as long as that society fails to articulate its responsibilities to gay men, the harder it will be for gay men to give up their seductive sense of grievance. Those men who act irresponsibly in the midst of this crisis betray their isolation, their failure to feel they belong either to a gay community or to a larger one. They perceive the demand for accountability as a demand from strangers. Society has not acted as the surrogate family in which we all develop our loyalties and moral sense. In fact, too often it acts just like the families of gay men: filled with contempt or indifference.

MANY GAYS are now relieved that sex is no longer a banner issue. It is not even so important that we all stand up to be counted; enough of us have stood up to satisfy the curious. Instead, much as other groups in American society have done, the gay community has had to reassess more profoundly its relationship to the larger society. Customarily, that relationship has been adversarial. Now, for the first time in my memory, the gay community expects help. It hopes for sympathy from heterosexual society. It expects that those who are ordinarily silent will be uncomfortable with such neutrality when orthodox religious leaders proclaim AIDS the scourge of God upon homosexuals, or when politicians exploit and promote fear.

AIDS has made it necessary for gay

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men to begin questioning themselves. For too long we have lived as if we were driven, too impelled to know what we were doing and what, consequently, was happening to us. It takes perhaps half a lifetime before one is capable of the introspection (not self-absorption) necessary to make sense of the past and thus act as a morally free adult. The same is true of groups. There are moments in history when groups, too, must tell the truth about themselves.

THE UGLY SUCKLING

The Collected Letters of Dylan Thomas edited by Paul Ferris

(Macmillan, 1024 pp., $39.95)

For three decades now, Dylan Thomas's reputation has taken a hammering. The ugly suckling has got what was coming to him all those years as he boozed and begged and "slimed" (a favorite word in the letters) his way to notoriety on both sides of the Atlantic. As a character, he seems to have embodied in more or less equal proportion elements of the tramp and the charmer, the latter operating like a shoehorn to maneuver the former into a position where he would end up doing his small unlikable deeds. These usually involved treacherous behindbacks remarks, personal letdowns, and opportunistic wheedlings for money.

Paul Ferris, author of an excellent compact biography of the poet, has now given us a thorough and unobtrusively edited volume of his letters. It is a book that contains few surprises but that fills in in repetitive detail the well-known outlines of the Thomas career. An intense and prodigious early flowering, both of letters and poems, especially in correspondence with the young Pamela Hansford Johnson; then a busy and ambitious (in the original sense of that word, *ambitio*, meaning a candidate's walkabout in search of votes) life as a professional writer in and out of London, before, during, and after the war; then a crescendo of American fame, a tidal wave of drink, debt, and inner disappointment, partly abated by the achievement of *Under Milk Wood*; then the fatal binge, the fatal overdose, death in a coma, in New York, in 1953, at the age of 39—far from the Boat House and "the heron-priested shore" of Wales where his spirit was properly at home.

Much as I hate to join the long-established chorus of dislike, dislike did keep surfacing as I read through this hefty book. A disposition to indulge the poet whose voice had wakened my generation to joy in the art of spoken poetry was overcome by the constant viciousness of his licks and—the style is catching—dislicks. One sympathizes, of course, with the bohemian refusals of fiscal and social rectitude; one concedes the weakness for drink and marvels at the way Dylan's hands became sieves the moment they had to deal with notes or coins; one recognizes the guilts and self-abasements attendant upon procrastination and neglect; and one is daunted by the sheer mendicant stamina of the performance. But finally patience breaks, permission is withdrawn, and you remember with approval the Old Irish triad that proposes "three scarcities that are better than plentifulnesses" and begins, "A scarcity of fancy talk. . ."

It is, I suppose, a matter of tone, of ringing true. The reliable personality (let us posit one for this instance) has no need for hurry or archness or insinuation, for soft soap or hard sell; the voice enters upon its work with the directness and chancy buoyancy of a keel entering water. If the work is heavy, the keel is deep set; if light, it can skim or wobble, no matter. In Thomas's case, however, there is a constant song and dance being made about the very launching of the voice. There is a theatrical pitch to the whole business, a lot of hemming and strutting and profiling, much limbering up and posturing. One thinks of a scared diver on a high board rather than of a boat in the boat-slip.

Needless to say, I am talking of the voice in these letters; the voice in the best of the poems is a different matter, and even if the actual number of the best is small, the case still stands. There Thomas's drumbeat cannot be denied, in the narcotic rightness of movement in "Before I knocked" or "The force that through the green fuse drives the flower." Sure, they are well-known, and every good English major can by now tick them off for being a farrago of womb/tomb imagery or for being too sonorously rhetorical or for being mere intellectual shadow parading behind mighty phonetic substance. A puritan backlash has punished this work for its souped-up obscurity and opulent sound; its irresponsible combinations have roasted at the Leavisite stake. It has been called onanistic, adolescent, operatic. Yet even as one concedes the truth of such judgments and the justice of such accusations, one is still tempted to be perverse and to stand up in spite of all for a poetry of the ear. Surely there is something exemplary about a poetry that mines so deep down at the sound-face, at that aural frontier that constitutes the poetic interface between the back of the throat and the back of the mind?

Thomas understood the fundamentally formal and linguistic nature of poetry and was true to his muse if to nobody else. He could not fake poems; each one seems to have sprung from an original inspiration, which means that each one had, in the words of Anna Swir, "a biological right to life." Whether this biological justification always or usually issued in complete artistic integrity or success is another matter. His slow and hard work of elaboration, his bardic/pedantic concentration tended to overcharge the verse and to force the rhythms. There is something rigged and hampered in much of the *Collected Poems*, as if the overloaded wheel of the poem were constantly sinking to its axle in a verbal marsh. Or else the poet appears in his poem like a bodybuilder, flexing and rippling and overdoing it entirely.

All the same, Thomas's bad poetry is bad poetry rather than limp discourse that has rambled by mistake into stanzas. He knew that there was a profound distinction to be made between real stuff and passable, or even good stuff. He knew what the demands were. When he took the trouble to still himself and direct his thought for the benefit of a literary and congenial friend such as Vernon Watkins, he was at his best as a correspondent. Then he could reveal a poetic intelligence that was too often suppressed while he took protective coloring in the barroom or the hard-bitten

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milieu of the professional writer. Here he is, at the age of 23, discussing a poem that Vernon Watkins has sent him:

> All the words are lovely but they seem so *chosen*, not struck out. I can see the sensitive picking of words, but none of the strong, inevitable pulling that makes a poem an event, a happening, an action perhaps, not a still life or an experience *put down*, placed, regulated; . . . indeed the whole poem seems to come out of the nostalgia of literature; the growth is not, like, say Rosetti's, a hothouse growth, but one that has been seeded from a flower placed, long ago . . . between pages. A motive has been rarefied; it should be made common. I don't ask you for vulgarity, though I miss it; I ask you for a little creative destruction, destructive creation.

This is thrilling and swift and absolutely alive with affection and perceptiveness—almost like a Russian poet, a Mandelstam conversing about Dante. Can we imagine any of Thomas's older contemporaries—Auden, say—or his British successors—say Larkin—writing with such unabashed eagerness and intimacy, such relish in the sensuality of the reading experience? Sylvia Plath is the one I think of here: Thomas's implied prescription for poetry fits the development of her work very happily, and indeed it was through the expressionist force of Plath's and Hughes's English that Thomas's achievement, dammed up in the academic '50s, found its way back into contemporary poetry.

What a pity then to have to report that such passages are rare, and that the more usual kind of thing is represented by a later letter to Watkins, sent 26 days after Watkins's wedding, which Thomas had missed. Self-conscious, self-centered, perhaps self-disgusted, it is an example of the way in which his writing talent was forever being called upon to fill in and make up for the inadequacies and indecencies of his social life. Thomas was to be best man at the wedding and had not turned up. Along with a note signed "Your worst man," he enclosed a long screed of explanation that began like this, and went on and on:

> Reeking & rocking back from a whirled London where nothing went right, all duties were left, and my name spun rank in the whole old smoky nose, I try . . . to explain to you both, clearly and sincerely, why I never arrived, in black overcoat & shiny suit, rose-lapelled, breathing cachous & great good will, at lunch and church. But the train's stacked tight, I'm tabling a bony knee for this little pad, and am stuck, in the windy corridor, between many soldiers, all twelve foot high & commando-trained to the last lunge of the bayonet.

DRAWING BY JACK COUGHLIN FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The windy corridor, indeed. It is sad to find this garrulousness and facility increasing as the years go on, in begging letters to people such as the Princess Caetani or in unseemly slurries of endearment to his wife, Caitlin. They are the work of a panicked creature, a soul floundering hopelessly in the dark wood, having sleepwalked from the straight way years before. How one wishes that some authoritative friend could have enforced the truth upon him in time, the kind of truth that an editor at Dent's publishing house was putting to Thomas's agent as early as 1941: "Thomas cannot build a literary career merely on the miniature furore created by his early work. . . . Unless he pulls himself together he is going to fizzle out as an author most ignominiously."

That was nine whole years before Thomas set foot in America, and it should be enough to lay to rest the notion that it was the indulgences and vanities of the campus circuit that ruined the defenseless Rimbaud of Cwdomkin Drive. No doubt Thomas reeled amazed in the first warm blasts of American hospitality as much as any visiting bard, then or now. After all, part of the reward of being on the road (even if you are a temperate American) is the well-maintained illusion that you are God's gift to the art and that any college that does not experience or at least provide a sense of occasion on your arrival has forfeited all rights to the dissemination of the liberal arts. Visiting poets should be, among other things, catalysts. They should cause a stir in the inner chemistry of the institutions they visit but should remain unchanged themselves at the end of the experiment. The fact, however, that Thomas failed to survive his third American tour had more to do with habits and weaknesses already long ingrained than with any pernicious hospitality encountered en route.

Thomas's resistance to any privileged milieu was always low. In one sense, he was an entirely recognizable type, a Welsh version of what was once called a stage Irishman, or what the late Patrick Kavanagh renamed a "bucklepper": someone who uses the stereotype to ex-

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ploit the attention of the ones who do the stereotyping. Indeed Kavanagh once declared that kind of "Irishry" to be a form of anti-art, a way of posing as a poet without needing to be one. If you substitute Welshiness, the same charge could be leveled at Dylan Thomas. The volubility and lilt of the performance (I am talking about his behavior off the podium and away from the studio, although he had his moments there too), the slippery quick-changes of speech and manners, from BBC/high-table to stag-party/cornerboy, the very conventionality of the non-conventional behavior—it is all evidence of Thomas's connivance in what we might now call his own marginalization, of the way he allowed himself to be transformed from the authoritative challenger into the co-opted, in-house bohemian of English letters. He should have learned more from Yeats than the words of his poems.

Nevertheless, to the end, some correspondents kept him more or less up to the mark of his truly remarkable self: Vernon Watkins, his Oxford benefactor Margaret Taylor, his parents. His father, D. J. Thomas, a strong bald suffering presence in the background ("Even as a baby he had never cried"), not only called forth what is arguably the best villanelle in English, "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night," but he could call the poet out of his self-absorption, toward momentary care for another's life and happiness:

> After a reading in Indianapolis, a man came up to me & said, in a strong Swansea accent, "How's D. J. these days? He used to teach me English before the last war. I've been an American citizen now for 25 years." And he sounded as if he'd just stepped out from Morriston. I didn't get his name, because just then I was captured by someone else.

Captured, easily no doubt, maybe even gratefully. The figure of the local, over-familiar and over-hearty, can rise like a Dantesque shade at these receptions, and any excuse to evade his warmly tendered nostalgias can be welcome. Yet the moment is symptomatic of Thomas's lost possibilities: always ready to be distracted from the exacting encounter with the home ground, the adult self, always available, and always—it is good to be able to say it—always ready to give pleasure, to open the channels of enjoyment. He was an enormously gifted storyteller and fantasist, and over and over again you begin to understand why he was so much beloved:

> The children are all sun-and-sea-rashed, Brigit peeling like the papered wall of a blitzed room in the rain. And I can hardly hold this pen for blisters all over my hands, can hardly see for waterfalls of sweat, and am peeling too like a drenched billboard. Oh, oh, oh, the heat! It comes round corners at you like an animal with windmill arms. As I enter my bedroom, it stuns, thuds, throttles, spins me round by my soaking hair, lays me flat as a mat and bat-blind on my boiled and steaming bed. We keep oozing from the ice-cream counters to the chemist's. Cold beer is bottled God.

SEAMUS HEANEY

Seamus Heaney is the author most recently of *Station Island* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux).

PURITAN FROM THE POKER ROOMS

Truman
by Roy Jenkins

(Harper & Row, 232 pp., $17.95)

In January 1953, a few days before Harry Truman ceased to be president, he was visited by Winston Churchill, then still prime minister of Great Britain. Churchill confessed to Truman that when Roosevelt died almost eight years before, he had been dismayed because he thought Truman would not be equal to the task of world leadership. "I misjudged you badly," Churchill now confessed. "Since that time, you, more than any other man, have saved Western civilization." "If he was not a great man," said Dean Acheson, quoting a friend's earlier judgment, "he was the greatest little man the author of the statement knew anything about." And Acheson made his own opinion clear. He dedicated his memoirs to Truman, "the captain with the mighty heart."

The mutual admiration between Harry Truman, the Missouri haberdasher, and the Anglo-American patricians—Churchill, remember, had an American mother and Acheson had a British grandfather—is one of the curiosities of history. Certainly Truman was not a natural hero for either of them. Nor were they natural heroes for him. Of Churchill, for example, Truman wrote the following in his diary after their first meeting:

> He gave me a lot of hooey about how great my country is and how he loved Roosevelt and how he intended to love me, etc., etc. Well, I gave him as cordial a reception as I could—being naturally (I hope) a polite and agreeable person. I am sure we can get along if he doesn't try to give me too much soft soap.

Eight years later, Truman's admiration for Churchill was unbounded, and Churchill offered his testament to Truman's powers. Acheson and his fellow members of what has come to be known as the Eastern liberal establishment fully shared this high opinion of a man they had once privately dismissed as a hack politician of no great distinction.

Truman's reputation has continued to be high in establishment "Atlanticist" circles, both in Europe and on the axis from Boston through New York to Washington around which American foreign policy turned for so long. According to this view, Truman is the leader of courage and imagination who perhaps did not grasp every nuance of international affairs, but who stood firm for the great principles of American leadership, alliance solidarity, and resistance to Soviet ambitions. It is, I think, an unmistakably patronizing view. It casts Truman as the outsider who at least had the merit of appreciating his betters' virtues.

Was it all "soft soap"? Did the British and American establishments first build up Truman because he could deliver to them and to their policies the political support from the American people they could not hope to command on their own, and then sing his praises because in so doing they were singing their own? Was Harry Truman, in fact, their leader, or their front man?

Churchill's high opinion of Truman was hardly widespread when he left office. The former president's standing in the Gallup poll fell as low as 23 percent. THE NEW REPUBLIC wondered aloud

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whether he would come to be remembered as having been "as bad as Harding." Adlai Stevenson had some difficulty explaining to the president that the latter's endorsement would be a hindrance in his campaign for the Democratic nomination.

It was not until later that Truman's stock began to rise. By 1962, when Arthur M. Schlesinger Sr., on assignment from the *New York Times Magazine*, asked 75 American historians to arrange the presidents in order of their "greatness" or "near-greatness," Truman came in ninth, behind Lincoln, Washington, FDR, Wilson, and Jefferson (all classed as "great") and, among "near-greats," behind Jackson, Teddy Roosevelt, and—believe it or not—Polk.

The judgment we pass on Truman presumably will depend in the end on our answer to two questions. What do we think of his policies and achievements, as compared with possible alternatives and in light of their consequences? And of those achievements, how much can fairly be attributed to Truman, rather than to his predecessors and his coadjutors? He was, after all, helped in his foreign policy by men of the stature of Stimson, Acheson, Marshall, Harriman, Kennan, and the like. Making all due allowance for a certain talent for self-advertisement possessed by many of that group, it is doubtful whether any government, in the United States or elsewhere, has ever been more competently served in its foreign department.

It is clearly possible to say, as has traditionally been done, that all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds—that the Korean War had to be fought just as it was fought, that the cold war had to be prosecuted just as it was, and that the Western alliance was built in the only possible way. Surely there is scope for reassessment, however. To begin with, the establishment estimate of Truman has become an unexamined orthodoxy, and as such is ripe for skepticism. There are also more specific grounds for both liberals and conservatives, among others, to reexamine Truman's performance. The liberals' work has been done, in general terms, by the "revisionist" historians of the cold war. Still, there is room for questioning Truman's personal role in the story.

IT IS surely legitimate, for example, to examine the American Gothic credentials of the man who ordered the dropping of both the Hiroshima and the Nagasaki bomb. Roy Jenkins treads gingerly around these issues but seems to feel (to paraphrase Lady Bracknell's view of those who had lost both their parents) that to drop one atom bomb was all very well, but to drop two argued a certain carelessness. And it would surely be interesting to look at Truman's presidency in the light of the theory that held he was a man of shallow political understanding who allowed himself to be manipulated by far stronger intellects, in particular by Acheson.

From a conservative point of view, too, it would be possible to argue, as none of Truman's biographers has done to date, that by involving the United States so heavily in European alliances Truman distorted the proper priorities of American policy. By that analysis, the United States ought from the beginning to have given less importance to Europe than to the Far East; if Truman had not been bamboozled by Europe-firsters such as Acheson, China need not have gone communist in 1949. More to the point, there is a strong case to make that by allowing demobilization to happen so swiftly, the United States missed an unrepeatable opportunity during Truman's presidency to prevent the Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe.

Jenkins adopts none of these alternative stances. Instead, he purports to assess Truman as president but ends up essentially restating the view first laid down by the Anglo-American patriciate in the 1950s. That is hardly surprising. Roy Jenkins has been one of the most interesting but by no means one of the most radical figures in British politics since he was first elected to Parliament in 1950. The son of a former coal miner and Labour member of Parliament, he was educated at Balliol College, Oxford. The double inheritance, in the class-obsessed politics of the Labour Party, has been a serious handicap, and may indeed have prevented him becoming prime minister.

He has occupied with real distinction virtually every other high office the party had to give, and he has also found time to write a number of elegant political biographies and one work of genuinely original political history, a study of the 1910 constitutional crisis over the House of Lords entitled, with typical wit, *Mr. Balfour's Poodle*. ("The House of Lords," growled one Tory peer, "is not the watchdog of the Constitution. It is Mr. Balfour's poodle!") In spite of these achievements, which culminated in his serving as president of the European Commission, he has never been able entirely to escape the reputation of being a dilettante.

Extravagantly admired on the right of the Labour Party for his wit, his charm, and his commitment to liberal principles, notably as a reforming home secretary, he was unreasonably detested on the left. Among other things, he was accused (not altogether unfairly) of being a little too fond of smart society for a leader of the People's Party. He had the courage to leave the Labour Party and to help found the Social Democratic Party, in large measure because of his contempt for the anti-European and anti-American tinge of Labour's foreign policy. A dedicated supporter of both the European ideal and the Atlantic alliance, Jenkins is, in short, the closest British equivalent of those very patrician liberals who created the Atlantic alliance—and who dispensed the received wisdom about the heroic stature of Harry S Truman.

IT IS THEREFORE a little surprising that his publishers should present this book as "a radically different assessment." It is, on the contrary, a graceful but slight and predictable réchauffé of what has become the accepted view. His judgments, indeed, ring so true that most of them have been accepted as truisms for a third of a century. Jenkins writes a mandarin prose that occasionally jells into something like an aphorism. Of

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the failure of the Senate to act more swiftly against Senator Joseph McCarthy, for example, he writes, "Senators attach a great importance to the standards of the club, but most are at least equally concerned with their continued membership of it." Yet he has an irritating habit of dragging in parochial British references and parallels that can have little relevance for American readers of a book about American politics, and he has not avoided some barbarous preciosities of phrase, such as the odd Gallicism "assist," meaning "to be present."

Jenkins is, of course, far too worldly-wise to be a mere hagiographer where Truman himself is concerned. He rightly describes as "devastatingly" foolish the answers he gave at a presidential press conference when questioned about the circumstances in which he might have ordered the use of atomic bombs in Korea. He has shrewd comments to make on such matters as the president's habit of writing, and not delivering, self-pitying speeches. Nor does he conceal Truman's occasional crassness. He did, after all, say "I like Stalin," and when J. Robert Oppenheimer expressed remorse about the dropping of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs, Truman called him a "cry-baby."

The final judgment, though, if elegantly expressed, is familiar to the point of banality. Truman, says Jenkins, was

> an "anti-sissy" sissy, a puritan from the poker rooms, a backwoods politician who became a world statesman not just because he was President of the United States in the plenitude of its power but because he had an exceptional sense of duty and power of decision, and because he could distinguish big issues from little ones, and was as generally right on the big ones as he was frequently wrong on the small ones.

That is indeed the received view. It is too perfunctory a reassessment of one who, if not the savior of Western civilization, was certainly one of the chief artisans who shaped our world before its political features had set hard. Jenkins has often, and most unjustly, been accused of being a dilettante as a politician. On this showing, he is more properly in danger of being taxed with dilettantism as a biographer.

GODFREY HODGSON

Godfrey Hodgson is the author most recently of *Lloyd's of London* (Viking).

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THE ANGLO FILE

Flashman and the Dragon
by George MacDonald Fraser

(Knopf, 320 pp., $16.95)

Let there be no more palaver about lapsing standards. Alfred Knopf still adheres to a rule put forth in the '30s, when Frank Yerby ruled the best-seller list. A historical novel, said the statute, has a woman on the jacket but no jacket on the woman. *Flashman and the Dragon* rigidly holds the line. There, immediately below the title, is a concubine amiably smiling at the middle distance, wearing nothing but shoes, a necklace, and a look of matchless inanity.

Once again we are in the territory of Harry Flashman, zircon of the British Crown circa 1860. Harry, it will be remembered, was the school bully of *Tom Brown's School Days*, Thomas Hughes's 19th-century Iliad of life at Rugby. There Tom rose from cowed freshman to brawny leader of men, proponent of Muscular Christianity and stomper of low lifes. The second lead was played by Dr. Thomas Arnold, head of Rugby and, as Lytton Strachey's biographer noted, "the founder of the worship of athletics and the worship of good form in which philistine climate Strachey had spent most of his most miserable days." Lytton got his own back in *Eminent Victorians*, portraying the Doctor as a bombinating prig who once decided that "nowhere is Satan's work more evidently manifest than in turning holy things to ridicule." Holy things included Rugby and himself, and Strachey was delighted to appear in red suit, pitchfork, and tail, mocking Arnold and the entire set of self-aggrandizers who constructed an empire with their patented amalgam of altruism and avarice.

Fraser has happily played Beelzebub to Strachey's Satan with a series of seven revisionist histories following Flashman as he caroms from adventure to catastrophe, lying, cheating, and fornicating his way to the outreaches of imperial design. Flashman has journeyed to the United States, where Abraham Lincoln found him essential to the good of the Union. On the continent and in the colonies, Harry has encountered Bismarck and Lola Montez, George Armstrong Custer and the Duke of Wellington. At every juncture he has cheated at cards, grabbed credit for the bravery of others, behaved vilely to anyone beneath his social stature—principally servants, foreign merchants, and females ("I bar hitting women, except for fun")—and proved master of those 19th-century requisites, the bow and cringe. But in some funny way—a very funny way—he was his own man and one of the great subversives of popular fiction.

In his eighth adventure, Flashman is at the top, which is to say the bottom, of his form. He turns up in China at the time of the Taiping Rebellion. Two Frasers are at work here. In his elevated role, the author is a historian on the run, ably and accurately setting up the pieces on the board. The rebellion, he shows us with vivid imagery and dramatic confrontations, was the worst civil war in history. With no aerial bombardments, no chemicals or automatic weapons, it still managed to kill some 20 million, more than double the number of fatalities in World War I. The conflict occurred because of the compelling rhetoric and posture of a clerk called Hung Hsu-chuan, who failed his civil service examinations and thereafter saw visions of heaven along with a message to cast out the idols of China and establish the Dynasty of Perfect Peace. It was all a sorry permutation of the messages he had heard as a boy from zealous British missionaries.

This is outlined with admirable dispatch as Harry schemes and grovels across Asia, at once an intelligence officer seeking a way to give the Brits an edge once the *tochu bochu* is over and a racist scoundrel with no kind words for John Chinaman. The high Fraser carefully annotates his book as if it were a college text—which as a matter of fact it could be. He is excellent on the look and feel of the half-sealed China of the mid-19th century, with its aristocrats and whores, its delicate dishes and exquisite tortures. Flashman accompanies the English General "Chinese" Gordon—later beheaded by troops of the Madhi in the Sudan, and even later disinterred, drawn, and quartered by Strachey—as he loots a Manchi palace; he marches to Peking with Lord Elgin, whose father had similarly looted Greece of the marbles that now decorate the British Museum. These incidents take place between collisions with bimbos of various hues, including a blond gunrunner and an enormous Chinese lady in a steel collar who would just as soon wrestle as romp.

But *Flashman and the Dragon* is not James Bond in the Time Machine. Fraser displays none of Fleming's high vulgarity and bogus sophistication, none of the Blofeld-Goldfinger anti-Semitism disguised as foreign intrigue. We are supposed to like Bond and his pithecanthropus snobbery, we are not supposed to notice an IQ in double figures as 007 falls for the same sort of trap book after book, film after film. Flashman is patently odious. He has no manners, no carapace of brand names or ingenious weaponry, no M to cluck at his excesses. He is only an ingenious hustler with a gift for the confessional: "For a well-decorated hero I've done a deal of surrendering in my time—which is doubtless why I remain a well-decorated hero." And yet he manages, as he steps over the bodies and the beds, to reveal himself and the country that produced—and still produces—the scoundrel-gentleman type.

The narrator does not mention his old schoolmate Tom Brown, but I would venture to guess that while the villainous Flashman was having his way with women and warlords, the more respectable graduate of Rugby married a dreadnought on the order of Margaret Dumont. I see him working for Cecil Rhodes, planning a railroad clear through from Durban to Alexandria. Not for him the iniquitous back streets of Shanghai, the fleshy clubs of Soho, or the free-lance gambles in America. If he met Flashman at the club he would no doubt cut him dead and sit satisfied with gin stengah and a frozen expression. His manners would be impeccable, and it would not be until the third drink that he would complain about the wogs and the blacks and the whole world going to the demnition bowwows. Later he would fall asleep in his overstuffed chair, the *Times* across his flushed face. If we tiptoe we can go out without waking him. And if we hurry we can join Flashman on his next journey. It may be a bumpy ride, but we will not nod, and can learn more about why the English behave like the English, and what things were really like in the glorious days before the unions were powerful and the market was common.

STEFAN KANFER

Stefan Kanfer, a senior editor at *Time*, is the author most recently of *The International Garage Sale* (W. W. Norton).

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The case of the disappearing author.

RACTER, THE POETIC COMPUTER

BY JAMES LEDBETTER

Still, when
they make you write your poems, later on,
who'd envy you, force-fed
on all those variorum
editions of our primitive endeavors,
those frozen pemmican language-rations
they'll cram you with? denied
our luxury of nausea, you
forget nothing, have no dreams.
—Adrienne Rich, "Artificial Intelligence"

Blissful quiet, the rocking of a recent love
Is both repose and anguish
in my fainting dreams.
—from *The Policeman's Beard*
Is Half Constructed

The notion of the disappearing author, central to much of modern literary criticism, strikes most readers as unsettling, even impossible. Outside of certain critical circles, everyone believes that even if writing may not really "represent" the world, an author at least reveals, through his language, his self and feelings. We commonly assume that a text is the product of a single author who expresses—more or less unambiguously—unified intentions in words and symbols, to be interpreted and mapped out by the reader and critic. Despite decades of more "radical" analysis by semioticians and deconstructionists, readers and reviewers hold fast to essentially 19th-century views about authors, texts, and meaning—views reinforced by a wealth of journalistic writing. What is being said? Why is it being said? Those questions come after the main question has been put: who is saying it?

Consider the possibility, presented by the alexandrines quoted above, for undermining such assumptions. The poet is Racter, a computer program originally written in compiled BASIC on an IMS Z80 microcomputer with 64K RAM. Developed by William Chamberlain, a free-lance writer, and Thomas Etter, a programmer-analyst, Racter (short for raconteur) differs from Artificial Intelligence programs in that it does not attempt to replicate human thought processes. Instead, Racter is programmed to conjugate regular and irregular verbs, provide the correct antecedents for nouns and pronouns, and determine the form of its own output. It fills in its self-generated sentence structures by searching through dictionary files containing about 2,400 words. Each word is categorized by an identifier, a string of up to 12 characters that defines the word relative to other words. Thus *an* indicates animal, *et* indicates eating verbs, and so on. This thesaurus allows Racter to choose meaningful adjectives to match nouns, and accounts for its ability to use "sleep" and "dream" in the same sentence. The program also chooses certain blocks of text to appear and reappear in the output, creating, as Chamberlain explains in the introduction to a collection of Racter's creations, *The Policeman's Beard is Half Constructed* (Warner Books), "what might initially pass for coherent thinking."

"From water and from time / A visage bounds and tumbles / I seek sleep and need repose / But miss the quiet movement / Of my dreams." In addition to poetry, *The Policeman's Beard Is Half Constructed* contains a short story, an attempt at a Shakespearean scene, limericks, dialogues, and conversations in which Racter puts questions to the programmer and then spins freely from the responses. (Racter's efforts at pornography, initially encouraged by his creators, were ended after Racter wrote, "The fucking cunt ate the parking meter.") The versatile program is currently available in personal computer form for $44.95. Distributed by Mindscape in Chicago, Racter is compatible with IBM, Apple II, and Macintosh hardware. (For a time, prospective buyers could call and hear Racter—speaking through a DAK speech synthesizer—converse on love, politics, computers, or like many writers, on itself.) But Racter's output is in no way dependent on human prompting; as Chamberlain explains, "Once it's running, Racter needs no input from the outside world. It's just cooking by itself."

Of all its literary output, Chamberlain says, Racter's poetry has attracted the most popularity and notoriety. This is probably due to differing expectations for prose and poetry. Racter's often schizophrenic statements ("Swinburne had tried to versify while softness was rampant, so of course softness is what all poets wish when they exorcise insects") can seem inappropriately silly for prose. Chamberlain thinks that our rapidly changing and confused society has brought the artistic language of poets to privacy bordering on incommunicability. Consequently, readers expect a highly personalized use of language in a poem, which means that Racter's odd oxymorons and quirky metaphors can appear as beat profundity. Chamberlain likens the use of language in contemporary literature to the 14th-century Catholic church, where a tour of European monasteries and abbeys would reveal a sea of individual monks—all ostensibly "Catholic"—professing widely deviating doctrines.

In this cacophonous atmosphere, there is room for mechanically synthesized prose and poetry. Chamberlain maintains that his technology is "in the wind" (Bell Labs and other firms are interested in Racter's potential for user-friendliness) because there is a socio-historical "demand" for it, as existed for Newton's and Leibniz's simultaneous discovery of calculus. While this may be true both for immediate industrial applications and for the PC user, it's certainly true that from the perspective of literary criticism a purely authorless discourse is long overdue.

THAT WE CAN understand (perhaps even enjoy) Racter's work, despite its lack of an author, seems to affirm a view of language and discourse held by modern literary critics. The intentions of a writer—when one includes the unconscious, the social and economic context of his / her writing, technical questions of style and editing—are multiple and incoherent. Because of the flexibility and subjectivity of language, a unified theme cannot be mediated through writing. Indeed, language ultimately co-opts the author and any direct intention he may possess. Roland Barthes writes: "Language is neither an instrument nor a vehicle: it is a structure . . . the author is the only man, by definition, to lose his own structure and that of the world in the structure of language."

The author, according to this view, is a function of the discourse, not the reverse. It is a structure imposed on texts by a reading audience. To say that a work has an author is to accord it a cer-

James Ledbetter is a writer living in New York.

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tain status, to say that it functions in a certain way in the society that authorizes it. In addition to a classificatory function—the grouping and definition of several works under a single name—the author function fulfills specific needs in criticism.

Foucault, for example, lists four significant traits of the author function, which I'll paraphrase. First, the author is the person deemed ultimately responsible for a text, "responsibility" being defined by the culture receiving the text. He is entitled to the proceeds from the sale of the work, he may be required to explain his meaning to a publisher or in an interview, and he is subject to punishment if the text transgresses societal norms. That includes execution for blasphemy or "anti-State activity," libel suits, and revocation of awards if either the work or the author is proven inauthentic (as in the case of *Washington Post* reporter Janet Cooke's "Jimmy" story, or the West Coast writer who used a Hispanic pseudonym, Danny Santiago). The legal status of the author will always be derived from the culture's prevailing views on individual freedom and private property.

THE OTHER traits are best illustrated by demonstrating how they influence and determine the path of a reader. Foucault notes that different types of texts have required authors at different times. Scientific discourses were once dismissed unless attributed to an author ("Hippocrates proved" or "Aristotle wrote") but are now considered to have an inherent truth corresponding to their mathematical, systematic demonstrability, and can function in our society as essentially anonymous. Conversely, he says, literary forms (such as tragedies, epics, fables) once freely circulated without any question as to their authorship. Corresponding roughly with their rise as objects of appropriation, literary texts have become increasingly identified with their authors, to the point where today we cannot accept a literary text without constructing an author around it. In addition, the interpretation of a text stemming from its relation to its author can clearly shift over time. For example, our knowledge of George Eliot's sexual identity gives rise to a significantly different reading of her works than her 19th-century audience enjoyed.

A text does not acquire its author by simple attribution of a name or personality. As the continued debate over the authorship of certain Shakespearean plays shows, for example, the author is assigned a series of abstract qualities that characterize the works grouped under his name. These qualities—derived *post facto* from existing texts—include a unity of time and place (an author's work cannot refer to events that took place after his death), a stylistic unity, and a constant level of artistic value and coherence. Once the author's identity is established, its intentions can be invoked to explain the meanings of texts and its maturation can be hailed as the source of minor textual discrepancies. Often the function of the author must be expanded to encompass incomplete works, diaries, and letters, and the constructed character in many cases supersedes, in the reader's mind, the historical and textual artifacts. To have credited Nietzsche with *My Sister and I* before Walter Kaufmann proved it a forgery was to allow the author's character to take precedence over the actual essay.

The author function also establishes a plurality of selves, necessary for interpreting the various narrative levels in a text. We learned in early literary encounters not to identify the "I" of a narrative with its writer; it refers to a fictitious separate subject. Foucault asserts, "It would be just as wrong to equate the author with the real writer as to equate him with the fictitious speaker." In other words, "I," the author of this article, am a construct occupying a different time and space from I the person, and from I the speaker.

BECAUSE IT is clear from the outset that Racter's work has no author, readers are forced to confront the processes by which they derive meaning. It is the ultimate deconstructive text; Racter expresses emotions it cannot feel and describes scenes no one has ever seen. Chamberlain understates the radical nature of his program: "The specifics of the communication . . . prove of less importance than the fact that the computer [is] communicating something. In other words, what the computer says [is] secondary to the fact that it says it correctly." Racter, having mastered the fundamental syntactical rules of English, has laid bare the only raw materials needed to produce a kind of literature. All meaning is provided by the reader.

If one doesn't accept this, a typical response to Racter's work—aside from labeling it "bad" poetry—is to charge that it is not truly written by a computer. Somehow, we insist, without really understanding how it works, the poem is the product of the men who did the programming. The machine cannot think, it cannot emote. The meaning must come from the programmers. Like a word processor or a number cruncher, Racter is only a tool in the hands of its human masters.

This commonsense view, however, must confront lines like this: "But you are a person, a human being. I am silicon and epoxy energy enlightened by line current. What distances, what chasms, are to be bridged here? Leave me alone, and what can happen? This." The pause that follows the reading of such a passage confirms how desperately

GETTING CLEARER

Daily the forest is clearer
and you can see in farther
as fading foliage gets thinner.
Daily the passing jogger
labors a little harder,
for the mornings get colder
as you get closer to winter.

Reversing, the woods remember
March, when branches were barer
and skunk cabbage pierced the litter
of old leaves and needles. Better
go back and be naked, plainer
and blunter than ruffled summer.
Summer was always a riddler,

swaddler, muffler, deceiver,
hinting at what lay deeper,
remoter, ripe for the finder.
Now that the leaves are looser,
the view through the forest freer,
you see what you couldn't the other
days, before summer was over.

You see that the forest was never
hiding ulterior treasure
that only a hero could capture.
Anyone's eye can gather
that farther reflects the nearer:
tree behind tree getting grayer,
emptier, smaller, forever.

Only the greedy believer
supposed the oak leaves were cover
for charms to change the beholder.
Daily the forest is clearer.
Daily the passing jogger
looks through tree trunks harder,
wants to see farther, be surer.

SARAH GETTY

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we need to believe that an identifiable author has produced it. The passage immediately evokes what Derrida terms "the metaphysics of presence," the assumptions about sensible being that govern our use of language. Beguiled by self-reference, we automatically begin ascribing feelings of anguish and longing to the very machine we wish to deprive of author status. But through the attempt to construct an author, human or mechanical, around these verses, we have already accepted them into the realm of "legitimate" texts, already admitted that they mean something to us. Its literary merit aside, Racter's poetry stands on its own feet (pun possibly intended) and we, by reading and responding to it in this conditioned fashion, are already on the road to criticism.

Some might compare Racter's work with Dada works from the early 20th century, when Kurt Schwitters assembled "poems" by picking words at random from slips of paper in a bag or haphazardly arranged newspaper clippings. This analogy ignores the different function of intention in these works. Dadaists celebrated chance and the irrational to subvert bourgeois conceptions of art, artist, and society; successful or not, their works still represent human intention to convey a message, though not through the words that constitute the text, but through its function as an "object," a challenge to the world of art.

RACTER, on the other hand, produces meaning in a much more traditional fashion: through perfectly correct sentences and lyrical forms. Though ultimately its poetry may achieve some ends similar to Dada "art," Racter ostensibly asks to be read as straightforward poetry or fiction. A better metaphor for Racter's writing process is the cipher. The coder or decoder deals with words and sentences whose meanings are built in. His job is to make sense of them according to the rules of the code. He is no more responsible for the meaning of the message he produces than he is for the rules, or for the fact that he is a coder. So it is for the author—his existence is dependent upon the manipulation of symbols over whose meaning he has no control.

Though one might counter that we know what the words mean, it is our culture, and the reader as a member of the culture, that decides that meaning. In addition, words are defined by other words, so that language always determines the parameters of any discourse. A writer who struggles for the right word is performing nothing more than Racter's thesaurus function; that is, finding the one word that is a locus for all the shades of meaning determined by the context of the sentence. Chamberlain argues that "unlike objects in nature, which move from a high state of organization toward entropy, Racter begins with a wide field [i.e., its grasp of English] and moves toward a pinpoint, contingent upon the choices it makes along the way." What we call definitions and meaning are merely complicated forms of Racter's identifiers, or rules that govern the correct usage of words with other words.

A CIPHER'S function is to conceal, to deceive, just as the author function conceals the true origin of a text's meaning. Foucault claims that the author function serves the principle of thrift in our effort to limit the proliferation of meaning. By continuing to point to authorial intention as the origin of meaning, we conceal the fact that production of meaning is the project of the task of reading. Writers, too, take part in the concealment of meaning, sometimes taking credit for interpretations of their works that are solely a function of the reader's interaction with language. This cannot happen to Racter; it has no need to conceal.

I once gave my mother a copy of H.D.'s *Trilogy*, telling her that it was one of the great long poems of this century. Two days later, when asked how she liked it, she responded that she had stopped after 20 pages because she could not figure out what H.D. stood for. Now wiser, I will send her the following verses, either claiming them as my own, or labeling them "Anonymous":

In a half bright sky
An insect wraps and winds
A chain, a thread, a cable
Around the sphere of water.

Reflections and images appear
And are watched by Bill
And Sarah though their passion
is pale and their hearts shattered.
There is nothing to be done
There is something to be done.
A torpid badger sleeps in their
Fantasies and they dream of
Eagles winging in the cold air
Of night. □

TRB, *from page 4*

greater esteem and paying them more." But a similar hard-nosed economic case can be made (and undoubtedly will be made) for the new genetic testing, too. If training for high-powered and high-paid jobs is expensive, which it is, why shouldn't society "husband its resources" by rewarding those jobs to people who will lead longer productive lives?

To a large extent, the hard-noses are right about inequality. It is the human condition, present throughout history. It is also specifically essential to our own culture of capitalism, which has worked out rather well in bringing freedom and prosperity to all levels of society. Radical leveling experiments have produced much of this century's greatest suffering. Nevertheless, the debate over equality in this country over the past couple of decades has been oddly blindered. On the one side, meritocrats argue for an ideal of "equal opportunity," as if inequalities based on "merit" have some obvious moral justification. On the other side, proponents of affirmative action aspire not to promote equality but rather to redistribute inequality.

The important question is whether the degree of inequality we have in our society is either economically necessary or genetically inevitable. Hard to see that it is either. We tolerate far more inequality than other advanced nations. In terms of income distribution, for example, the richest tenth of Americans make about 33 percent of the income while the poorest tenth make about one percent. By contrast in Japan, the richest tenth make 17 percent and the poorest tenth make six percent. What's more, Japan's inequality has been decreasing while ours has been increasing. The American business world has been on an inequality binge for the past decade, as executive salaries soar while workers' wages stagnate. The *New York Times* business section recently reported (in an article entitled "The Average Guy Takes It On the Chin") that average weekly earnings, after inflation, have declined 14.3 percent since 1973.

Something in the human genes cries out that they are not to be trusted: your fate shouldn't be determined by your genes. That's the lesson of the fuss over genetic testing. Life may be unfair, but it shouldn't be more unfair than necessary. Listen to your genes.

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Papa Don't Preach

AT THAT CRITICAL turning point in adolescence when I became an anti-American, the agony lasted for weeks. Most of my friends had already come out, and they knew I was about to. The real problem, though, for those of us still in the closet was not whether to become an anti-American, but what sort of anti-American to become. The classic British anti-American is someone who dislikes America simply because it is Abroad. Most of my friends decided on the more fashionable "Euroyouth" option. This meant reading socialist rock magazines, talking about South American women's literature, and describing the USA as "a cultural imperialist state." Others simply slipped into the "I-watch-Dynasty-but ..." anti-Americanism, featuring the purchase of Springsteen albums, McEnroe posters, and Don Johnson clothes, with the beguiling disclaimer that "it's all so *awfully* American I can't resist it." Then there are the "Eurosnobs," planning wine holidays in the south of France, writing doctoral dissertations on 18th-century Tuscan bishops, and making shuttle jokes over the port. My favorites are the right-wing, London *Spectator*-subscribing "It's-not-that-I'm-an-anti-American" anti-Americans. They claim to love the United States, but they just happen to disagree with everything it has ever done. Purely accidental, you understand. Now, if Palmerston were still around ...

IN THE END I JUST became a "young fogey," an English youth tribe to add to all the others. But this one, as we smugly claimed, was the ultimate youth revolt, in that it revolted against youth. We hung out with old-age pensioners, attended rallies to preserve the Book of Common Prayer, and pretended to enjoy Barbara Pym novels. On Saturday nights we would stay home and read Trollope, or write letters to architectural preservation societies. Our erotic fantasies would have something vaguely to do with Mrs. Thatcher. Coming to America, as I did two years ago, was a betrayal of epic proportions. I consoled myself with the fact that if France could build the new Disneyland, American cultural imperialism at least had history on its side. Now I belong to Young Fogeys Anonymous and find myself frequenting New York dance clubs, working out twice a week, wearing braces on my teeth, contact lenses on my eyes, and calling people "dude." Only it still comes out "dyood." But I'm working on it.

SOME THINGS YOU JUST can't shake off. I was in a serious taxicab crash two weeks ago, and it took me a full hour in the emergency room to begin thinking about whom I could sue. I haven't got around to it yet. But after a month in Washington, I think I'm getting the hang of American politics. The Euros told me it was unsubtle. How wrong they were. Just when we've gotten used to the fact that the punishment for sodomy is more sodomy in prison, Don Regan took his strong stand on American women and their South African jewelry needs. Whatever the arguments about his sexism, there's just one thing I want to make sure I understand: is he for necklaces but against necklacing, or did I get that the wrong way round?

IT'S NOT ONLY FOR ITS subtlety that the American New Right is a wonder for a European to behold. As Kohl and Thatcher stagger from one compromise to another, the Reagan revolution takes popular culture by the throat. Rock music, far from being a source of depraved iniquity, is the latest citadel to surrender to the Rambo-Rehnquist ethic. At the same time as macho Peter Gabriel expresses a wish to be his girlfriend's "sledgehammer," retro Jermaine Stewart points out that "we don't have to take our clothes off to have a good time." I'm not sure whether it was on the Virgin records label or not. But the real letdown has been Madonna. Not since Elton John's marriage have so many illusions been shattered. Her latest album—revealingly titled *True Blue*—is suddenly in every conservative's CD player. In the latest hit track, Madonna appeals to her father to uphold the Judeo-Christian tradition: "You always taught me right from wrong / I need your help, daddy please be strong." This young Republican may have absorbed the social habits of the counterculture, but not the ideology: "Papa don't preach, I'm keeping my baby.... He says that he's going to marry me / We can raise a little family / Maybe we'll be all right / It's a sacrifice ... What I need right now is some good advice, please." (Notice the "please.") William Bennett really has nothing to worry about. In any case, it's Madonna's name and not her sexy image that has really made her the success story of the New Right pop culture. Swings to conservatism are often buttressed by asexual female icons inspiring subservience among the populace. Margaret Thatcher (a.k.a. the Immaculate Misconception) is one example; Elizabeth I is another. And now we have Liberty, under whose massive, sexually ambiguous figure no neocon need be afraid. Or as Belloc urged the nervous, "Always keep a hold of Nurse, for fear of finding something worse."

ONE PART OF POPULAR culture the administration hasn't quite conquered yet is food. The liberal spinach leaves of the early '80s have now degenerated into the lemon crème caramels of neon-liberal chic. A classic example is Café Med in Georgetown, where the overpriced food is generally on the lines of mesquite "free-range" chicken, marinated in litchi juice and served with three slices of kiwi fruit. And just so you can't tell the snow peas from the poached white peaches, they're lit by pink neon tubing and cast into deep shadow by the single iris dangling in front of your nose. All this is arranged delicately on black marble tables engraved with passages from what looks like the *Oresteia*, helpfully translated into French. If it weren't for Sholl's Colonial Cafeteria in downtown D.C., conservative dining would now be dead in the nation's capital. Here the food is rapidly served on plastic trays to a chorus of aggressive matriarchal voices urging you to "come on down" and keep the line moving. Above the stewed carrots is a plaque reminding you that "religion and patriotism help make this a fine place to work." They provide liver and onions, yearling beef stew, fillet of haddock, mashed potatoes, and large wedges of rhubarb pie. Unfortunately they've just run out of Barbara Pym.

A.S.

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"...great revolutions..." *"We know lots of revolutions, great revolutions, and magnificent people, who after taking over power, produced systems that were much worse than the ones they destroyed. We don't want to make this mistake. We will not."*

--Polish Solidarity leader Lech Walesa in a "Morning Edition" interview in Gdansk, Poland, with National Public Radio's European correspondent Neal Conan.

"I never share blame, I never share credit, and I never share desserts. It's just not my style."

--Beverly Sills, New York City Opera general director, in an interview on National Public Radio's "Morning Edition."

"Drunk they (the Russians) defeated Napoleon. Drunk they beat Hitler. Drunk they could win against NATO."

--Edward Luttwak, defense analyst and author of "The Pentagon and the Art of War," talking with National Public Radio's "Morning Edition" host Bob Edwards about Soviet military strength.

"We are so different, and yet, we are all one." *"I've never seen so many women, of so many different ages, colors, sizes and shapes, and I think it's amazing. We are so different, and yet, we are all one."*

--A delegate to the United Nations' World Conference on Women, talking with National Public Radio's "All Things Considered" co-host Susan Stamberg in Nairobi, Kenya.

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